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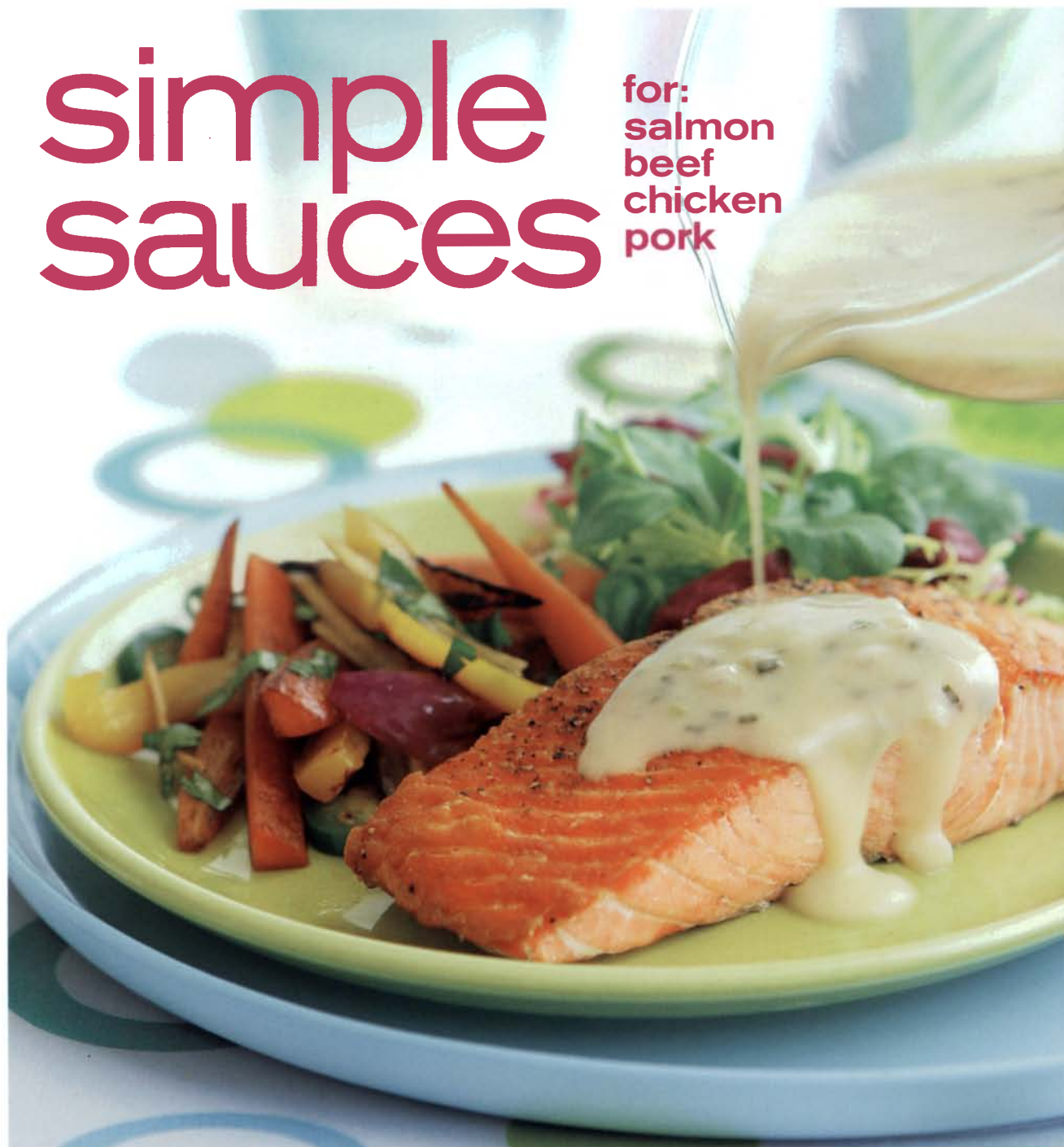
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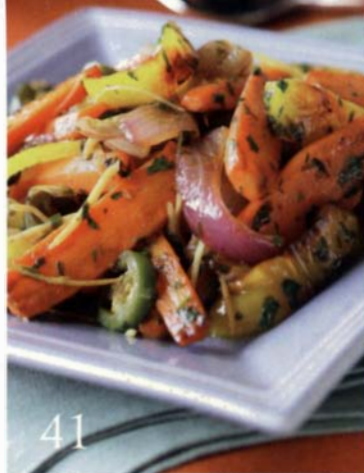
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# fine Cooking

APRIL/MAY 2005 ISSUE 71

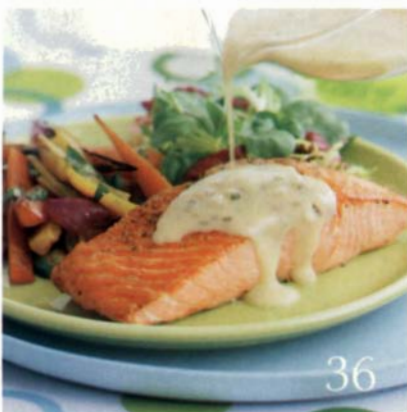


## RECIPE FOLDOUT

86c Quick & Delicious



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*Sear-Roasted Salmon with  
Lemon-Rosemary Butter Sauce*

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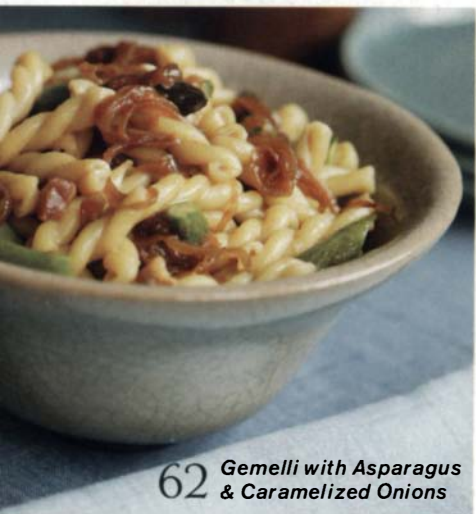
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## Fresh Ideas for...

We've packed this issue with recipes that highlight everything we love about spring, from lamb to asparagus to homemade ice cream. Whether you want to make an elegant Easter meal or have a casual get-together, we've got you covered. (Note: You may need to double or halve the recipes to suit your needs.)

## Spring Entertaining

### Easter Menu

Three make-aheads—the crust for the lamb, the potatoes for the cakes, and the dessert—mean this special menu is easy to create.

**Roasted Leg of Lamb with Dried Cherry, Mustard & Herb Crust** (p. 54)

**Braised Asparagus & Cipolline Onions with Pancetta & Balsamic Butter Glaze** (p. 45)

**Potato Cakes with Chives & Sour Cream** (p. 23)

**Individual Vanilla Puddings** (p. 68)

**TO DRINK:** A full-flavored Chianti Riserva or Cabernet.

### Cioppino Party

With a little planning, you can pull this off after work on a Friday. Two days ahead, make the ice cream (or buy your favorite brand). The night before, make the garlic oil and chips and the broth for the Cioppino. Just before your guests arrive, make the salad, toast some bread, and reheat the stew to cook the seafood.

**Forty Shades of Green Salad** (p. 10)

**Cioppino** (p. 64)

**Vanilla Ice Cream** (p. 70) topped with macerated fruit

**TO DRINK:** A medium-bodied Pinot Noir or Zinfandel—preferably the same wine, or a similar one, used to make the Cioppino.

### Quick Casual Dinner for Four

If you bake the cookies in advance, you can probably make this menu in an hour or less.

**Sear-Roasted Salmon with Lemon-Rosemary Butter Sauce** (p. 39)

**Braised Green Beans with Ham & Mushrooms** (p. 45)

**Soft & Chewy Vanilla Cookies** (p. 67), sandwiched with your favorite fruit preserves

**TO DRINK:** A crisp Sauvignon Blanc from New Zealand, with sassy acidity and herbal flavors.

## All-in-One Dinners

Any one of these easy dishes, plus a crusty loaf, a salad of spring lettuces, and glass of wine would make a lovely meal.

**Spring Vegetable & Potato Frittata** (p. 86c)

**TO DRINK:** A Chardonnay with modest oak.

**Lemon Barley "Risotto" with Shrimp, Bacon & Spinach** (p. 86c)

**TO DRINK:** A dry, inexpensive sparkler would be fun; try a Prosecco (from Italy) or a Cava (from Spain).

**Chicken Ragoût with Shiitakes & New Potatoes** (p. 86c)

**TO DRINK:** A light-to medium-bodied Pinot Noir.

**Barley Minestrone** (p. 76)

**TO DRINK:** A young, fruity Italian wine like Barbera.

**Campanelle with Broccoli Raab, Sausage & Olives** (p. 86c)

**TO DRINK:** A medium-bodied, easy-drinking Grenache-based red wine with soft tannins, like Côtes du Rhône.



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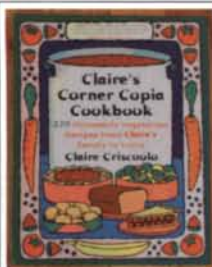
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# from the editor

## Hello & Goodbye

### Fade to black.

*The Fine Cooking staff says goodbye to publisher Martha Holmberg (center). Counterclockwise from top, Susie Middleton, Kim Masibay, Jennifer Armentrout, Jessica Bard, Amy Albert, Rebecca Freedman, Kim Landi, Steve Hunter, Li Agen, Sarah Jay, Annie Giammattei (on stool).*



If you grew up in the '70s like I did, you probably remember the commercials for the Veg-a-Matic—"It slices! It dices! It chops!" That machine did everything, though I'm not sure how elegantly. These days, we have more sophisticated choices for equipping our kitchens, and we're all better cooks for it. It's true that my mother produced great meals using little more than a paring knife and a big rickety skillet. But I also remember the Christmas morning she opened a new KitchenAid stand mixer my father had bought her—you'd have thought it was a diamond necklace, she was so excited. For years after that, we had homemade cheese bread for our morning toast and yeast rolls with dinner; that machine opened up the world of bread baking for her.

Whether it's the latest garlic gadget, an ultra-sharp ceramic knife, a cool espresso machine, or an eight-burner stove, there's something you've got your eye on, we know. That's why we're introducing our expanded equipment department in this issue (see p. 24). We'll not only have side-by-side brand comparisons, but we'll also take appliances for "test-drives," and we'll keep you updated on the latest tools and cookware. We'll profile something a little practical and a little dreamy in every edition.

While we're welcoming a new editorial section in this issue, we're also reluctantly saying a fond good-bye to someone who's been the heart and soul of *Fine Cooking* for many years. Many of you know Martha Holmberg as the long-time editor of *Fine Cooking*. Two years ago, Martha took on the role of publisher. Now she's setting off on a new adventure with her family—moving from Connecticut to Portland, Oregon, to be the food editor of *The Oregonian* newspaper. We're happy that she's got an exciting challenge ahead of her, and that she's headed to such a great food and wine city. But we hate to see her go. Luckily, she's promised

to write for *Fine Cooking* soon, and that's great news for all of us—Martha's not only a terrific editor (and all-around fun person), but she's also one hell of a cook!

—Susie Middleton, editor

**P.S.** Spring's here—celebrate with my Forty Shades of Green Salad at right.



### Forty Shades of Green Salad

*Serves four.*

I named this light, refreshing salad after a famous song by Johnny Cash about Ireland. It's a nice starter or side for spring menus.

#### FOR THE VINAIGRETTE:

**3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**  
**1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon fresh lime juice**  
**1 teaspoon honey**  
**Big pinch of kosher salt**  
**1 coarse grind of fresh pepper**

#### FOR THE SALAD:

**1 large head Boston lettuce, largest outer leaves and damaged leaves removed, washed, dried, and torn into bite-size pieces**  
**¾ cup loosely packed fresh parsley leaves (I like a mix of flat and curly)**  
**1 large (or 1½ small) Belgian endive, damaged leaves removed, halved lengthwise, cored and thinly sliced crosswise (¼ inch)**  
**2 to 3 scallions (white and light green part only), very thinly sliced on the diagonal**  
**1 small ripe but firm avocado**

**Make the vinaigrette:** In a small bowl, combine all the vinaigrette ingredients and whisk until thoroughly emulsified (it will look creamy).

**Make the salad:** In a large mixing bowl, combine the lettuce, parsley, endive, and scallions. Gently toss the greens thoroughly with about 2 tablespoons of the vinaigrette. Mound the greens onto four salad plates (white looks nice), arranging any endive and parsley pieces that have fallen to the bottom of the bowl on top.

Cut the avocado in half and remove the pit. Slide a large spoon between the skin and flesh to peel each half. Slice the avocado halves crosswise in very thin half-moons (⅛ inch thick).

With the flat side of a chef's knife, transfer the avocado halves to the mixing bowl, fan them out slightly, drizzle over another 1 tablespoon of the vinaigrette, and gently toss just to coat the avocado, keeping the slices somewhat together. Arrange a little pile of avocado slices on one quarter of the salad, propped up against the mound of leaves. Drizzle the whole salad with a tiny bit more vinaigrette and serve right away.



## from our readers

### A limited look at soy sauce

I appreciated the tidbit on how to tell different types of soy sauce apart in the Test Kitchen section of *Fine Cooking* #70. But when it came to the Tasting Panel, I felt you overlooked the dozens of versions found throughout Asia. I'm not sure if you meant to concentrate on Japanese soy sauce, but it would have been nice if you'd also discussed the various types sold in Asian markets.

—Terence Janerico, Boston, Massachusetts

**The editors reply:** Our goal with the Tasting Panel section of the magazine is to help you when you're doing your everyday shopping at the supermarket; for that reason, we only review products that are widely available in stores nationwide. Chinese soy sauces weren't included in the tasting because they didn't meet that requirement (for now, anyway). But we encourage readers to check out specialty markets and online stores to try high-quality artisan soy sauces and other ingredients. That's why we often feature such products in our Great Finds department.

### Yes, dry-aging beef is safe

I want to try the dry-aging technique for beef described in *Fine Cooking* #69. But is it really safe to leave a piece of beef in the refrigerator (even at the temperature prescribed) for a week? Why doesn't the beef go bad?

—Marna Fox, via email

**Jennifer Armentrout, test kitchen manager responds:** Refrigeration keeps spoilage microbes from speedily multiplying and quickly making the beef smell bad. Just as important is beef's high ratio of saturated fat, which goes rancid more slowly than unsaturated fats. Fish, poultry, and pork are higher in unsaturated fats, which is why they aren't aged as long as beef, if at all. According to Harold McGee in *On Food and Cooking*, beef can benefit from dry-aging for as much as a month if the temperature and humidity conditions are right. So the seven-day limit we put on our dry-aging process is actually fairly conservative, but we wanted to compensate for the unknown amount of time the beef has been "wet-aging" in the store before you buy it, as well as the fluctuating temperatures of home fridges. The beef we aged here in the test kitchen for seven days had almost no odor whatsoever. If it helps, think of dry-aged beef like cheese; this is

also a food that under the wrong conditions will spoil, but under the right conditions will age and improve for an even longer time than beef.

### Saved by the menu...and the locksmith

Recently I decided to prepare the entire Holiday Menu from *Fine Cooking* #69.

I was only about 30 to 45 minutes behind schedule (pretty good, for me!) and at 3:30 p.m., with guests arriving at 6 p.m., I accidentally locked myself out of my house. Without a coat. After I climbed the seven-foot fence to get out of my backyard, I stopped a teenager walking down the street with a cell phone. One locksmith and two hours later, I got back in.

The good news is that the guests were all close friends and perfectly happy to enjoy their kir royales while I constructed the croustades. The dinner turned out great, and everyone said it was the most decadent dinner party they'd ever been to. Thanks!

—Annette Brown, via email

## <sup>fine</sup>Cooking ...around the country

### March 12: Cooking Ahead with *Fine Cooking*, South Norwalk, Connecticut

Connecticut residents can join *Fine Cooking* editor Susie Middleton, test kitchen manager Jennifer Armentrout, and contributing editor Pam Anderson in a hands-on cooking class at Clarke, the New England distributor for Sub-Zero and Wolf Appliances. Learn to make delicious master recipes to cook ahead and use to make dozens of dishes throughout the week. Enjoy wine pairings and tips from senior editor Amy Albert. Space is limited for the \$75 class. For information, call 800-845-8679.

### April 1-3: Food & Farmer Weekend, Bolton Landing, New York

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*Fine Cooking* contributing editor **Tony Rosenfeld** ("Sear, Roast & Sauce," p. 36, and "Caramelized Onions," p. 60) knows that good, practical cooking techniques like sear-roasting can work in almost any setting. "Many of the techniques I use today in my home kitchen, I first learned from working on the line in a restaurant," he says. When he's not writing and developing recipes for *Fine Cooking*, Tony works as a food writer and restaurant consultant.

**Susie Middleton** ("Quick-Braising Vegetables," p. 41) is *Fine Cooking*'s editor and a blue-ribbon graduate of the Institute of Culinary Education (formerly Peter Kump's New York Cooking School). She loves vegetables, and in her nine years at *Fine Cooking*, she has written about many of her favorite methods for cooking them, including roasting, grilling, and now, quick-braising.

In 2004, **Raghavan Iyer** ("Rice," p. 46) was named cooking teacher of the year by the IACP. So when we were looking for an expert to teach us the best ways to prepare rice, Raghavan was at the top of our list. Raghavan has written two award-winning cookbooks and is hard at work on a third. He also leads food and cultural tours to India.

**Frank Pellegrino** ("Spaghetti & Meatballs," p. 50) is a co-owner of Rao's restaurant, a ten-table restaurant in East Harlem that's famous for great Italian home cooking and its impenetrable reservation list. He is the author of *Rao's Cookbook* and *Rao's Recipes from the Neighborhood*. Frank is also an actor who has appeared in films and television shows, including *The Sopranos*, where he plays the part of FBI agent Frank Cubitosa.

**Gordon Hamersley** ("Three Chefs Cook Leg of Lamb," p. 52) is the chef-owner of Hamersley's Bistro in Boston. Gordon is the recipient of many culinary awards and the author of *Bistro Cooking at Home*. **Umberto Menghi** owns three popular restaurants in Vancouver, two in Whistler, and a restored 16th-century villa in the heart of rural Tuscany. Australian chef **Luke Mangan** is the owner of Salt Restaurant, Bistro Lulu, and Moorish in Sydney. Luke's food has earned many accolades.

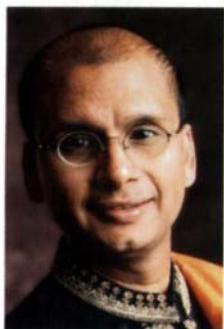
When the craving for french fries strikes, **Molly Stevens** heats up her oven, not a deep fryer. And in "Oven Fries," p. 58, she proves that roasted fries are just as deliciously addictive as deep-fried ones. In addition to serving as a contributing editor for *Fine Cooking*, Molly is the author of *All About Braising* and a co-editor of the *Best American Recipes* series.

**John Ash** ("Cioppino," p. 63), teaches wine training and cooking classes around the world. His latest book is *Cooking One on One: Private Lessons from a Master Teacher*. John's previous book, *From the Earth to the Table*, received IACP awards for Cookbook of the Year and Best American Cookbook and was nominated for the James Beard Foundation's Best American Cookbook.

*Fine Cooking* contributing editor **Abigail Johnson Dodge** ("Vanilla Desserts," p. 66) is the author of many cookbooks, including *Great Fruit Desserts*, *The Kid's Cookbook*, *Kids' Baking*, *Williams-Sonoma's Dessert*, and the recently published *The Weekend Baker*. Abby was the founding director of *Fine Cooking*'s test kitchen.



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READER SERVICE NO. 68



## Some pasta recipes call for reserving some of the cooking water to toss back in with the drained pasta. Why?

—Dan Walsh, via email

**A** Molly Stevens responds: Pasta is usually made from wheat flour, which means that it contains a high proportion of starch. When you cook pasta in boiling water, some of this starch leaches into the water. This explains why pasta-cooking water becomes cloudy and milky looking as the pasta cooks. The benefit of adding some of this starch-enriched water is that it can help a sauce “stick” better to the pasta, because starches have a somewhat gluey character. The starchy water also helps loosen pasta dishes, which makes the pasta seem well-sauced without excess sauce or olive oil. If you’ve tasted authentic Italian pasta dishes, you’ll know what I mean—the sauce is always used with some restraint, yet the dish is packed with flavor. It’s the addition of some of the starch-enriched pasta cooking water (usually ¼ to ½ cup, depending on how much sauce you have) that makes this possible.

*Molly Stevens, a contributing editor to Fine Cooking, is the author of All About Braising: The Art of Uncomplicated Cooking.*

Have a question of general interest about cooking? Send it to Q&A, Fine Cooking, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506, or by email to [fc@taunton.com](mailto:fc@taunton.com), and we’ll find a cooking professional with the answer.

## When substituting fresh herbs for dried, should I use more or less of the fresh herb?

—Gretchen Vogelsberg, via email

**A** Lynne Sampson responds: Using fresh herbs is a sure-fire way to enliven all of your cooking. The general rule when substituting fresh herbs in place of dried in a recipe is to use twice as much. The essential oils in fresh herbs are less concentrated than they are in dried form and, as a result, the flavors are less potent.

A more specific answer depends on the type of herb you’re using and how pronounced you want its flavor to be in the finished dish. When cooking with milder, tender herbs such as basil, parsley, and dill, you can even use up to three times as much fresh as dried, and sprinkle more onto each serving for garnish. More assertive, hardy herbs such as sage, oregano, and rosemary can

quickly overwhelm the balance of flavors in a dish. I recommend that you start judiciously, holding back to 1½ times as much fresh as dried. Then, taste and add a pinch more at a time until you reach the amount that suits your taste.

Most recipes calling for dried herbs instruct you to add them early in the cooking process. This isn’t always the best approach when using fresh herbs in their place. To preserve the vibrant flavor of tender herbs, add them during the final stages of cooking. With delicate herbs like cilantro and chives, it’s better yet to add them off the heat. When using hardy, strong-scented fresh herbs, add them during the early stages of cooking to temper them and build in a background of herbal flavor.

*Lynne Sampson, formerly a chef at The Herbfarm restaurant near Seattle, is a food writer and cooking teacher.*

## What is Fair Trade coffee?

—Penny Weller, Grovers Mill, New Jersey

**A** Seth Petchers responds: Because of historic low coffee prices, 25 million coffee-farming families around the world are struggling to make ends meet. Currently, the market price for coffee is below the farmer’s cost of production. However, The Fair Trade Certified label, provided by a nonprofit organization that acts as an independent third-party certifier, ensures that farmers are paid more, at least \$1.26 per pound. Importers and manufacturers are willing to pay the extra money for Fair Trade Certified products, which are often ranked highest for quality. Consumers have also driven the demand for Fair Trade coffee, and so importers, roasters, and cafés seek out the products for their clients.



Fair Trade Certified coffee also supports longer term sustainable agriculture goals. When farmers receive more money for crops, they can maintain their livelihoods, support their families, and also produce a higher quality product, because they have more money to invest in their business’s infrastructure.

Fair Trade Certified coffee is sold in supermarkets and retailers through companies like Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Millstone, Starbucks, and Equal Exchange. Look for the symbol above. If a package doesn’t carry the logo, it isn’t guaranteed to be Fair Trade Certified.

*Seth Petchers is the coffee program manager for Oxfam America, an international development and relief organization. ♦*



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READER SERVICE NO. 12



# Ten for \$12 & under

BY TIM GAISER

Finding delicious bargain bottles is one of a wine drinker's great pleasures, but sleuthing them out can be tricky. Happily, there's plenty from which to choose, especially if you're willing to experiment a little. Last spring, we selected ten of our favorite bargain finds of the year (*Fine Cooking* #64, p. 30), and we decided to do it again this year. Retail prices are approximate; all wines are widely available.

## Bubbly

### 2000 Mont Marçal Brut Reserva, Cava, Spain

**Price:** \$12

**What it tastes like:** Lively tart apple and crisp citrus flavors, with a touch of earthiness.

**Why it's such a bargain:** Aged a minimum of 24 months on the lees (more time aging with sediment makes for a more complex wine), this estate-bottled Spanish bubbly is among the best sparkling wine values at any price.

**Great with:** Shellfish; smoked fish; light appetizers; by itself as an apéritif.



## Syrah

### 2002 Wynns Coonawarra Shiraz, South Australia

**Price:** \$12

**What it tastes like:** Ripe black fruits with pepper and spicy oak.

**Why it's such a bargain:** Aussie Shiraz is one of the most appealing and easy-drinking reds made. This one combines delicious cherry-berry fruit with a lot of depth and complexity, especially for the price.

**Great with:** Pizza; burgers; ribs.



## Chardonnay

### 2002 Meridian Chardonnay, Santa Barbara County

**Price:** \$11

**What it tastes like:** Bright citrus and tropical fruit with a touch of toasty oak.

**Why it's such a bargain:** The wine landscape is cluttered with pricey Chardonnays with overripe fruit and too much oak, many of which are difficult to pair with food. But the Meridian is impeccably balanced and always a crowd pleaser—and for not much money. What more could you ask for?

**Great with:** Breaded chicken cutlets; seared salmon with citrus-based sauces; and just about anything else short of red meat.



## Rosé

### 2003 Goats Do Roam Rosé, South Africa

**Price:** \$10

**What it tastes like:** Tangy strawberry and red raspberry flavors with crisp citrus notes.

**Why it's such a bargain:** Good pink wines are all about delicious fruit and easy drinking (not soda-pop flavors). The Goats Do Roam (a pun on Côte du Rhône) has both in spades—and the name is a great conversation starter, too.

**Great with:** Cold pasta salads; pizza; sandwiches. The ultimate picnic and outdoor feasting wine.





## Sauvignon Blanc

**2004 Matua Valley Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand**

**Price:** \$11

**What it tastes like:** Zesty grapefruit, gooseberry, and herbal flavors.

**Why it's such a bargain:** Kiwi Sauvignons are among the most thrilling white wines made anywhere at any price. They often cost \$5 to \$10 more, but this bottle is one of the best I've tasted lately.

**Great with:** Shellfish; goat cheese; poached salmon. A delicious pre-dinner sipper.



## Pinot Noir

**2002 Beringer Founders' Estate Pinot Noir, California**

**Price:** \$12

**What it tastes like:** Fresh Bing cherries, light spice, and a touch of oak.

**Why it's such a bargain:** Pinot Noir has a well-deserved reputation for being the most finicky grape to grow and trickiest wine to make—and it's usually expensive. But this one is supple, versatile with food, and a great value.

**Great with:** Grilled swordfish; grilled salmon; roasted chicken with root vegetables. Soft enough to sip solo before dinner, too.



## White blend

**2003 Bonny Doon Vineyard Ca' del Solo Big House White**

**Price:** \$10

**What it tastes like:** This crisp, fruity blend of Viognier, Sauvignon Blanc, Marsanne, and Muscat offers aromas and flavors of ripe pear, honey, and tart grapefruit.

**Why it's such a bargain:** Bottled under screwcap by Randall Grahm, one of the wine industry's true innovators, this is another delicious, inexpensive gem.

**Great with:** Shrimp; smoked salmon; lightly prepared sole with citrus-based sauces. Good to sip before a meal, too.



## Italian blend

**2003 Falesco Vitiano, Umbria, Italy**

**Price:** \$12

**What it tastes like:** Succulent red and black fruits with herbs and a touch of earth.

**Why it's such a bargain:** The Vitiano is composed of equal parts Sangiovese, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Merlot and is made in the style of a far more expensive blend. Simply delicious.

**Great with:** Any red meat; rich dishes with tomato- or meat-based sauces.



## Cabernet blend

**2002 Laurel Glen Vineyards Terra Rosa, Mendoza, Argentina**

**Price:** \$10

**What it tastes like:** Plummy black fruits with hints of green olives, herbs, and toasty oak.

**Why it's such a bargain:** Winemaker Patrick Campbell is one of the undisputed masters of the Cabernet Sauvignon grape; his wines are top-tier. But Campbell is also fiercely committed to giving his fans a great bottle of everyday drinking red. Voilà—Terra Rosa.

**Great with:** Grilled lamb and beef; pot roast; braised short ribs.



## Zinfandel

**Rosenblum Vintners Cuvee XXVI Zinfandel, California**

**Price:** \$10

**What it tastes like:** Spicy boysenberry jam.

**Why it's such a bargain:** The Zin experts at Rosenblum combine three separate lots of fruit from some of California's best Zinfandel regions to make this delicious bargain quaffer.

**Great with:** Burgers; meatloaf; pizza.



*Tim Gaiser, a master sommelier, is a contributing editor for Fine Cooking.* ♦



# kitchen containers

BY REBECCA FREEDMAN

## ...that resist stains

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## ...that collapse for easy storage

The smart design of these adjustable containers allows them to flatten into 1-inch-thick disks, saving room in your cupboards. *Tupperware "flat-out" canisters*, from \$15 for a set of three, at [Tupperware.com](http://Tupperware.com) (800-366-3800).

## ...that pump out air

Our brown sugar stays moist and cereals stay crisp in this canister. There's a pump in its lid that vacuum-seals the container, removing air to keep food fresher. *Creative Gear Pump-n-Store canisters*, from \$12.95 at [Sur La Table](http://SurLaTable.com) (800-243-0852).

## ...that snap securely shut

These stackable containers are ubiquitous in the *Fine Cooking* test kitchen. Clips lock the lids tightly in place, but they're still easy to open and close. *Click Clack containers*, from \$7.50 at [Cooking.com](http://Cooking.com) (800-663-8810).

## ...that both measure and store

This glass pitcher comes with a lid, so it functions not only as a measuring tool but as a storage vessel as well. It's ideal for measuring liquids ahead or for storing batters. *3-cup measuring jug with lid*, \$7.99 at [The Container Store](http://TheContainerStore.com) (800-786-7315).

## ...that won't lose their lids

The lids for these ceramic bowls are never hard to find: they hook to the bowls' rims. We like that the lids snap off, though, making them easy to clean. *Bowls with removable hook-top lids*, from \$7.99 at [The Container Store](http://TheContainerStore.com) (800-786-7315).





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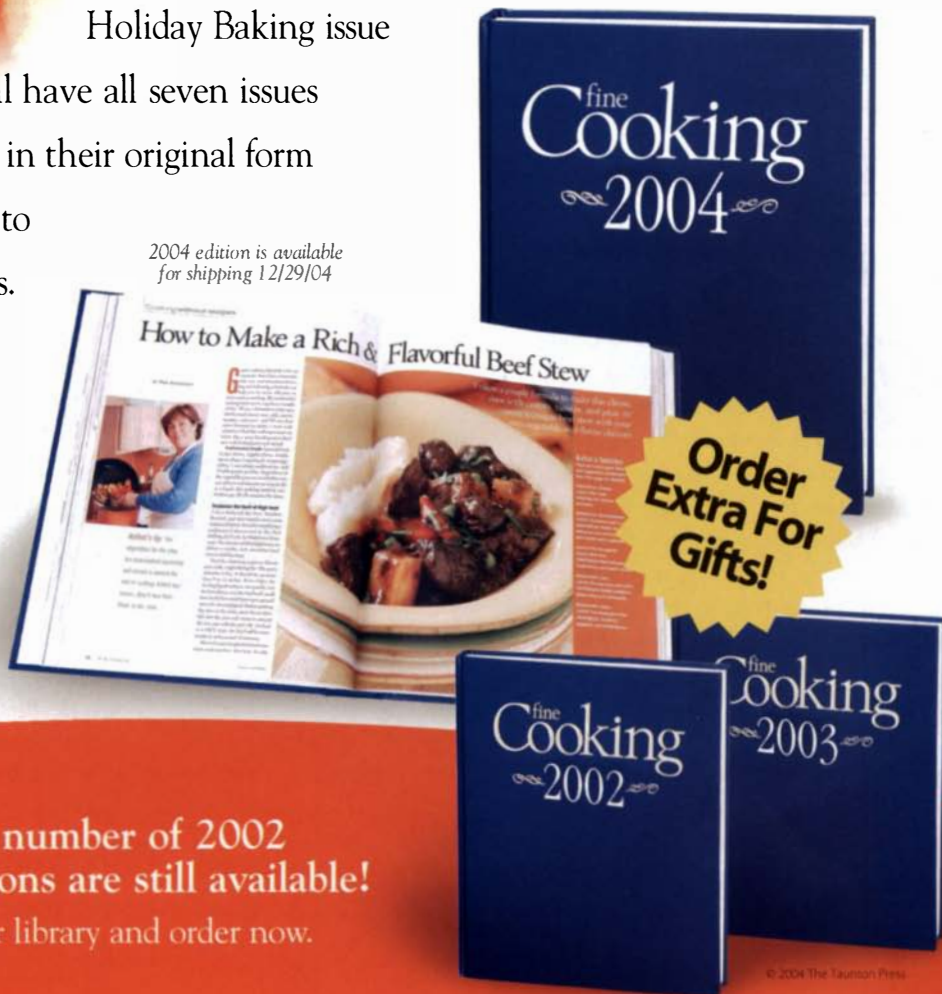
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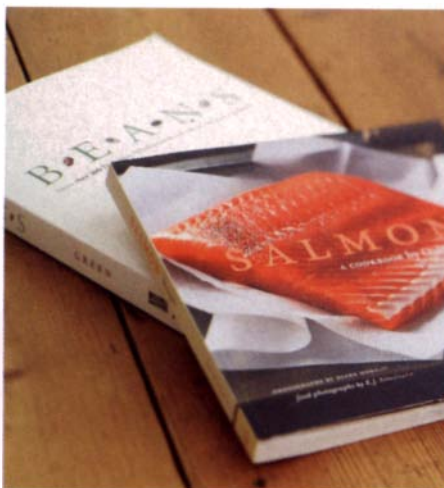


### books for cooks

## Everything you need to know about salmon and beans

From the deck of a commercial fishing boat in Alaska's Copper River Delta to the fish farms of Scotland, Diane Morgan traveled far to find out all there is to know about salmon. So it comes as no surprise that her captivating new book, **Salmon** (Chronicle Books, \$24.95), delivers everything a salmon lover could hope for: Respect for the species. Inspired prose. Evocative photos. Clear explanations of the differences between wild and farmed salmon. Tips on buying, handling, and storing. And, of course, pages and pages of tempting, thoughtfully crafted recipes, such as roasted leek and salmon tartlets, lemon-grilled salmon Caesar salad, and soy-lacquered salmon with green onions.

Similarly comprehensive is Aliza Green's new book, **Beans** (Running Press, \$19.95), which may well be the definitive guide to selecting, storing, cooking, and baking every imaginable bean. Chickpeas, favas, split peas,



sweet peas, green beans, lentils, peanuts—if it's a legume, it's in there. Green also offers 200 globe-trotting recipes, which you could cook from for as many days without ever getting bored: crostini with cannelloni beans one day, skillet-roasted chicken with black-eyed peas and country ham the next. A helpful chapter on legume-cooking basics ensures that every recipe gets off to a strong start.

—Kimberly Y. Masibay, associate editor

## A firm, nutty rice from France

Here's something new for your side-dish repertoire: This red rice from the Camargue region of southern France adds a toothy, textural twist to pilafs and salads. It cooks up with a pleasantly firm bite and a nutty flavor. Try it as a side for the cherry-crusted roast lamb on p. 54. *Camargue rice, \$7 for 1 pound, at [Zingermans.com](http://Zingermans.com) (888-636-8162).*



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## Fresh chives, an herb with verve

BY RUTH LIVELY

**W**hen you want a note of onion flavor but not the whole song, or when you crave a pinch of garlic but not the punch, reach for fresh chives. Chives contribute a refined hit of onion and garlic flavor, and their green color adds lots of eye appeal. They're not only easy to use and versatile, but they're also easy to grow and will return year after year (see the sidebar below left).

At the supermarket, look for chives with fresh, turgid stems. It doesn't matter whether they're thin or thick, just that they aren't wan or droopy. At home, I like to stand them in a glass with an inch of water. You can keep them right on the counter for a couple of days. Or wrap the chives in a barely damp paper towel and store in a plastic bag in the fridge, where they'll keep for several days.

I often use scissors to snip chives. To prevent the snippets from scattering, I cut them into a small, deep dish. If you chop chives on a cutting board, use a very sharp, thin-bladed knife so you don't bruise the tender leaves.

Chive flowers are edible, with flavor slightly more pungent than the leaves, so if you grow your own, don't overlook this pretty way to garnish a dish. Or add them to salads by snipping or pinching the individual florets from the cluster.

Chives are a classic with baked potatoes, and with good reason. Mildly pungent chives are fantastic with starchy foods (not only potatoes, but also rice, polenta, and couscous), and with butter and cultured dairy products. Chives are also great with fish and shellfish, eggs, and many vegetables, especially tomatoes and corn.



The best way to have chives on hand when you want them—and in abundance—is to grow them yourself. A 4-inch pot of chives is just a few dollars, and the investment will return year after year, getting bigger and better each time. Chives are undemanding. Plant them in moderately good soil in a sunny spot and water them when the soil is dry. Once established, they look after themselves. Chives are one of the first perennials to pop up in spring and they stay in good picking condition right through the first few frosts.

## Chives brighten salads, sauces, dips, and more

- ❖ Add snipped chives to a plain biscuit dough.
- ❖ Shortly before serving, stir a generous helping of chives into a pot of tomato or corn soup.
- ❖ Stir snipped chives into a white wine pan sauce for fish, or any pan sauce.
- ❖ Snip a few strands of chives into a vinaigrette destined for a seafood salad or for fish.
- ❖ Add a generous hit of snipped chives to potato salad, rice salad, or bean salad.
- ❖ Snip chives into quiches, omelets, or scrambled eggs.
- ❖ Punch up a green salad by snipping chives right into the bowl before tossing with the dressing.
- ❖ Flavor a risotto with a purée of chives and arugula or other herbs like parsley, basil, cilantro, and dill.
- ❖ Use a generous measure of chives in a puréed herb mix in salsa verde or green mayonnaise.
- ❖ For a chivey dip, fold chopped chives into softened cream cheese, feta, or goat cheese, and thin with half-and-half. Season with black pepper.
- ❖ For smoked salmon, offer a mound of chopped chives alongside.
- ❖ Work chopped chives and a little salt into softened butter and then chill. Melt a pat of the chive butter on hot fish, steak, or chicken just before serving.





### Potato Cakes with Chives & Sour Cream

*Yields four potato cakes.*

These are essentially seasoned mashed potatoes shaped into cakes and pan-fried until they've developed a delicious crusty exterior. They can be shaped into patties up to a day before frying. Serve with bacon and eggs or alongside roasted meats. Of course, you can skip the frying and just serve the chive mashed potatoes as is.

- 1 pound Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled**
- Kosher salt**
- ¼ cup packed finely grated Asiago cheese (1 ounce)**
- 5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- 3 tablespoons sour cream; more for serving**
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**
- ¼ cup thinly sliced chives; more for serving**

Put the potatoes and 1 teaspoon salt in a medium saucepan and add water to cover by about ½ inch. Cover and bring to a boil over high heat. Uncover, reduce the heat to prevent a boilover, and boil

until the potatoes are tender when pierced with a fork, 20 to 25 minutes.

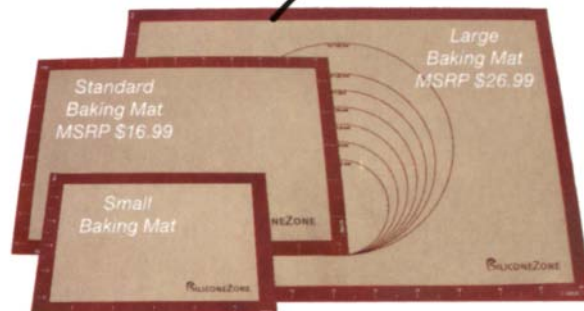
Drain the potatoes and pass them through a ricer or food mill back into the saucepan (or mash them as smoothly as possible with a hand masher). Add the cheese, 3 tablespoons of the olive oil, the sour cream, pepper, and ½ teaspoon salt; mix thoroughly. Add the chives and stir until well mixed. Taste and add more salt and pepper, if necessary. Divide the potato mixture into quarters and shape each into a squat patty about ¾ inch thick. (If making ahead, put the patties on a plate or tray in a single layer, cover with plastic, and refrigerate.)

Heat the remaining 2 tablespoons oil in a 10-inch nonstick pan over medium-high heat. When the oil is hot, set the cakes in the pan so they aren't touching. Cook until a deep brown crust forms, 2 to 3 minutes, and then turn and brown the other side, another 2 to 3 minutes (the cooking time will be a bit longer if the patties are chilled). Serve immediately, topped with a dab of sour cream and a sprinkle of chives.

Ruth Lively cooks, gardens, and writes in New Haven, Connecticut. ♦

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## test drive

### Great espresso without the fuss

The Nespresso D290 espresso machine eliminates both the guesswork and the messy work that normally accompanies making a cup of espresso at home. It requires no priming, measuring, grinding, tamping, or even cleaning. It's about as convenient as you can get, and amazingly, it also brews a fantastic cup of espresso. It's just one example of a new genre of espresso makers that use capsules or pods of measured, ground coffee to simplify the whole routine. The Nespresso line offers capsules in more than a dozen blends (including decaffeinated). To make an espresso, you just lift the head, drop in a capsule, close the handle, and press a button. In about 30 seconds, you get a cup of superb espresso with a luxuriously thick crema.

On the downside, the coffee doesn't always get piping hot, and the milk frother on our machine was fussy and mostly ineffective. Also, you have to order the capsules by mail. Nespresso D290, \$499 at Nespresso.com.

—Sarah Jay,  
managing editor

Wüsthof  
santoku knife

Granton  
chef's knife

LamsonSharp  
utility knife

## Not just for looks

It all started with the santoku knife, the Japanese-style blade that has become the “in” knife in the last few years. A santoku is defined by its shape—a blunted front and flat cutting edge—but it usually has another distinctive feature as well: a row of shallow dimples on the side of the blade. These depressions, called kullenschliff or a Granton edge, reduce friction and help prevent food from sticking to the blade.

As a result of the santoku's popularity, manufacturers have started adding the dimpled edge to other knives, too. Now you can get a kullenschliff edge on all sorts of knives. (For sources for the knives shown above, see p. 82.) Besides the fact that it looks cool, we appreciate a kullenschliff chef's knife for slicing potatoes, which usually stick to the blade when cutting. For slicing other foods, it perhaps has a subtle advantage over regular knives. But don't feel compelled to run out and replace all your good knives. Much more important than dimples is that your knives are sharp and frequently honed.—S. J.

### It's hollow, but is it hollow-ground?

Many people use the term “hollow-ground” to refer to dimpled knives (above). This is incorrect. In the knife trade, the term hollow-ground refers to how the cutting edge is ground, and it tells you nothing about whether the knife has dimples on its side or not. —S. J.



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## Oils for deep frying

The best oils for deep frying have a neutral flavor and a smoke point higher than the temperature at which you'll be deep-frying (which is usually 375°F). Good choices include peanut oil, safflower oil, and corn oil, all of which have smoke points above 400°F.

## It chops, dices, and minces



I've always liked chopping onions with a knife, but I actually love chopping them with the Kuhn Rikon Twist & Chop. I can reduce half an onion to a small dice in 20 seconds flat. Ten seconds to mince four garlic cloves. I've also used it successfully on apples, olives, and green peppers. Other vegetables also work, though it stumbles on very dense ingredients like nuts and carrots. The simple device is like a hand-powered version of a food processor, using a clever gear-driven design to create a fast, powerful spin of the blades. It's a cinch to clean and really fun to use. **\$17.95 at Cooking.com.** —S. J.

## test drive



**DeLonghi**  
**D895UX Cool-Touch Roto Electric Fryer**  
**\$129 at Amazon.com**

## Is this deep fryer right for you?

I've often thought I'd like to own a deep fryer—I love hush puppies and fried chicken, but I'm not crazy about the mess and smells I get from deep-frying in a pot on the stove. So I decided to try out one of the higher-end deep fryers on the market. The DeLonghi Roto electric fryer was surprisingly easy to use, and it's loaded with smart features, but I discovered that it's not the answer to all my deep-frying dreams. —Susie Middleton, editor

## features

**SAFETY:** The fryer is encased in a sleek plastic housing that stays cool. The power cord is magnetized so that if something catches on it, the cord instantly falls out of the outlet (to avoid pulling on the pot of hot oil). The lid remains shut while lowering and raising the frying basket to prevent splatters.

**CONVENIENCE:** A handy oil drainage system features a neatly hidden rubber hose. A filtering system cuts down on odors. A nonstick interior means food doesn't stick. The frying basket is dishwasher safe. The lid

has a window. The oil heats up very quickly, in about 10 minutes.

**EXTRAS:** DeLonghi makes several fryers (one model is half the price of this one yet includes the same convenience and safety features) but the Roto fryer has some nice extras. A rotating tilted basket bathes the food as it spins, so the fryer needs much less oil. There are five temperature settings between 300°F and 370°F; great for cooking french fries in two stages (do an initial fry at lower temperature and finish at a higher temperature).

## how it performs

This deep fryer operates on one controlling feature: you put food in the basket, shut the lid, and lower the basket. I had good results with anything sturdy, but wet batters stuck and cooked onto the basket. Here's what I tested and how they fared.

### DISAPPOINTING RESULTS:

- ❖ onion rings
- ❖ tempura
- ❖ hush puppies

### GREAT RESULTS:

- ❖ french fries
- ❖ fried chicken
- ❖ fried shrimp
- ❖ egg rolls
- ❖ panko-crusted chicken strips
- ❖ potato croquettes

## the bottom line

If you fry lots of french fries, fried chicken, or any breaded or wrapped food, invest in the Roto fryer. But if fritters and other battered food are on your menu, stick with a saucepan and a deep-frying thermometer.

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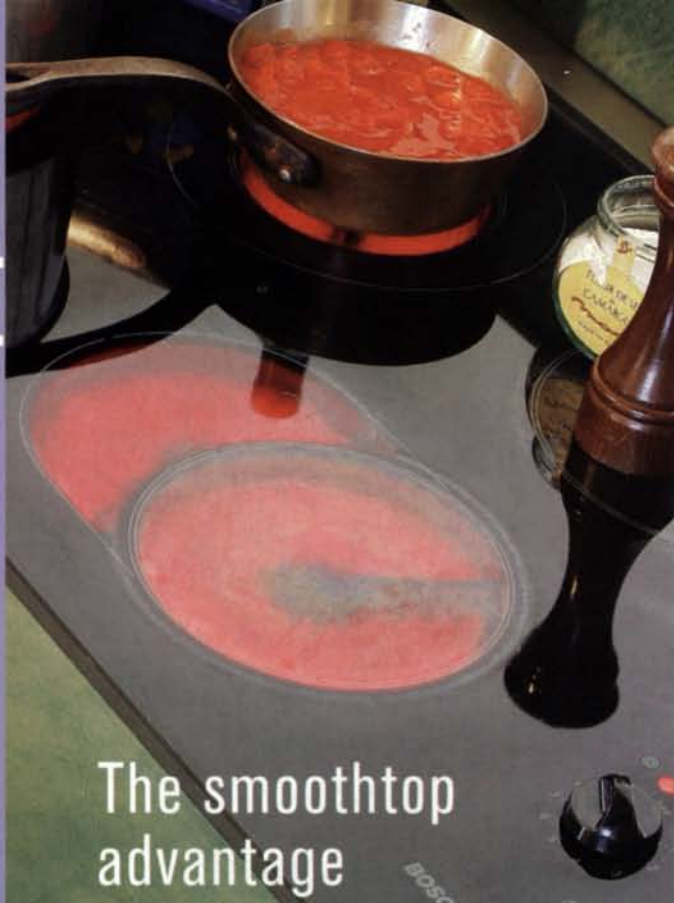
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## The smoothtop advantage

It's conventional wisdom that most cooks prefer gas burners to electric—gas is faster, easier to control, and more responsive—but if electric is your only option, take heart. Electric burners have come a long way since the slow-to-heat coils of the past, and the newest smoothtop (also called glass- or ceramic-top) models have several advantages.

**Adjustable rings.** Many smoothtops come with “dual-element” burners, which can be sized bigger or smaller. Use the inner circle for small pans or add an outer ring of heat for bigger pots. Some models even have three rings (for info, see p. 82).

**Bridge burner.** On some models, an additional burner can be activated to provide heat beneath a roasting pan or griddle (see the photo above).

**Efficient.** Smoothtops heat up quickly and are superb at holding a low simmer.

**Continuous surface.** It's easy to slide pots and pans across a smoothtop's flat surface. When the burners aren't in use, a smoothtop can double as a countertop.

**Easy cleaning.** No nooks and crannies to scrub, though you might need a special nonabrasive cleanser.

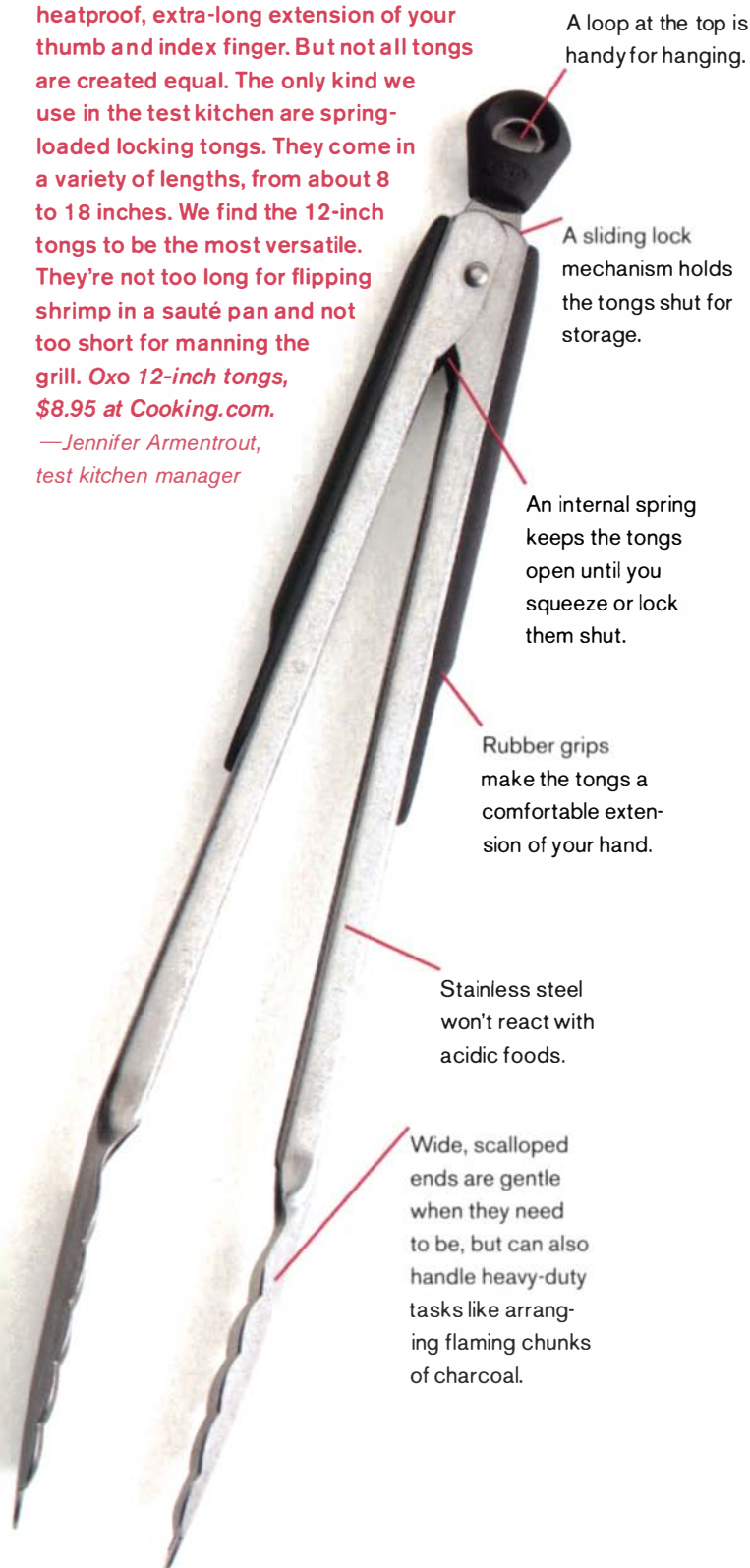
**Safety.** No open flame makes smoothtops less of a fire hazard.

—Amy Albert, senior editor

## The anatomy of a good set of tongs

For flipping, grabbing, and fishing tasks of all kinds, you can't beat a good set of tongs—they're like a heatproof, extra-long extension of your thumb and index finger. But not all tongs are created equal. The only kind we use in the test kitchen are spring-loaded locking tongs. They come in a variety of lengths, from about 8 to 18 inches. We find the 12-inch tongs to be the most versatile. They're not too long for flipping shrimp in a sauté pan and not too short for manning the grill. *Oxo 12-inch tongs, \$8.95 at [Cooking.com](http://Cooking.com).*

—Jennifer Armentrout,  
test kitchen manager







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## 3-quart sauté pans

BY SARAH PERLMAN

A 3-quart sauté pan is an indispensable piece of cookware. It's the pan to use for sautéing, of course, but it's also ideal for braising vegetables or small cuts of meat, making quick pasta sauces, pan-frying, and searing meat or fish before roasting. The straight sides of a sauté pan give you more total cooking area than a slope-sided skillet, and they're necessary for any dish that involves adding a substantial amount of liquid to the pan.

For this review, we limited the testing to pans with aluminum cores sandwiched between stainless steel, which is the most popular construction on the market. After copper, aluminum is the best conductor of heat, but it can react with food and alter its flavor. Stainless steel, though not a great conductor of heat, is nonreactive, easy to clean, and light in color so you can gauge changes in your food. Merge the two metals together and you get the best of both worlds.

We evaluated nine pans on their performance (how quickly and evenly each conducted heat while sautéing onions, searing chicken breasts, and making pancakes) and on other criteria, including how balanced they felt in the hand, whether the handle stayed cool, their depth and diameter, whether the lids fit snugly, and if the pans were oven- and dishwasher-safe.

—Sarah Perlman was the managing editor of *The New Cooks' Catalogue* and is a freelance television producer of food and travel shows.

### top pick

**All-Clad 3-quart stainless sauté pan**  
\$183.95 at [Cooking.com](http://Cooking.com)

All-Clad hasn't changed this stainless-steel line since starting 30 years ago and there's no need to do so. The sauté pan passed our tests with flying colors. It had one of the widest cooking surfaces of the pans tested and easily fit four chicken breasts. What we love most about this pan is its ability to heat up quickly and maintain an even heat. We sautéed onions to an even, golden brown over medium heat, never even adjusting the heat to prevent burning. We felt completely in control when searing chicken breasts. The pan produced a beautiful crust and a fair amount of browned, but not burnt, nubbins to deglaze for a sauce. This pan is heavy-duty without being heavy; it's the lightest of all our final picks. Though it carries a hefty price tag, it's a solid investment.

### runner-up

**KitchenAid 3-quart stainless sauté pan**  
\$179.99 at [Chefscatalog.com](http://Chefscatalog.com)

KitchenAid went into the pots and pans business six years ago, and it's doing a fine job. This pan had no trouble searing chicken breasts to a nice golden brown and left plenty of tasty bits on the bottom to flavor the sauce. There was a little unevenness in color when we subjected it to the onion test, and the handle, though grippable, heated up faster than we would have liked. The center tends to get hotter than the rest of the pan, but is easy to manage by adjusting the heat. The flared edge came in handy when pouring the pan sauce over the chicken.



### for larger stoves

**Viking 3-quart stainless sauté pan**

\$209.95 at [Cooking.com](http://Cooking.com)

If you cook on a professional-style stovetop and have the strength of a Viking, this pan could be for you. Of all the pans we tested, it has the largest cooking surface and weighed the most (by a long shot). On standard gas and electric ranges, the wide diameter of the pan created awkward situations with part of the pan extending beyond the burner. Onions took a very long time to cook and chicken browned unevenly. But when we tried it on an industrial range, it showed itself a winner.

### runner-up

**Sur La Table 3-quart stainless sauté pan**

\$110 at [Surlatable.com](http://Surlatable.com)

It may not be the Rolls Royce of cookware, but that wasn't Sur La Table's goal when they designed this moderately priced pan. The pan performed well overall in our tests, though it shares the same weakness as the KitchenAid pan—the center gets hotter than the rest of the pan. Onions browned evenly and the comfortable handle stayed cool throughout cooking.

### while they last

**Jamie Oliver Professional 3.5-quart sauté pan**

Store shelves will feel bare later this year when T-Fal discontinues the Jamie Oliver Professional sauté pan. It turned out beautiful flapjacks and produced golden onions without burning in less than 15 minutes. The comfy handle is oven-safe to 500°F. While it lacks a second loop handle and it doesn't easily fit four chicken breasts, this pan held its own next to our other winners; at \$60, it's a great value.

## Sauté pan or skillet?

What's the difference between a sauté pan, skillet, fry pan, and omelet pan? It depends on who you ask. Most cooking schools teach that a sauté pan has sloped sides, the better to make food jump and moisture evaporate. But most cookware manufacturers and catalogs call such slope-sided pans either a skillet, fry pan, or omelet pan. (Their size is measured by the diameter across the top, e.g., 10-inch, 12-inch.)

According to the manufacturers, a sauté pan has straight sides and is measured by its volume (e.g., 3-quart, 5-quart). Even though it contradicts the definitions we learned in culinary school, at *Fine Cooking*, we've adopted the names used by the industry to avoid confusion.

—the editors

*In addition to the sauté pans shown here, the following pans were also tested: Anolon Advanced Clad 3-quart sauté pan, Calphalon Contemporary 3-quart sauté pan, Cuisinart Multiclad Stainless 3.5-quart sauté pan, Kuhn Rikon Duroply Professional 3-quart sauté pan.*



# How to choose a range hood

If you're about to embark on a kitchen renovation, don't overlook the question of ventilation for your stove. A good range hood traps smoke, heat, steam, odors, and grease from cooking, and then ferries them to the outside. Think of a hood as one with your cooktop: when you turn on a burner, turn on the ventilation.

To help you navigate the bewildering (and expensive) world of vent hoods, we've created a map to guide you through the crucial issues. Answer the questions in order to figure out what kind of hood best suits your needs.

—Amy Albert, senior editor

## Can you vent to the outside?

True vent hoods, also called ducted hoods, have metal ductwork that sends exhaust to the outside of your home (through the roof or a side wall). Choose a ducted hood if at all possible. Ductless hoods simply recirculate air (as well as smoke, grease, and odors) and are far less effective.

## How big is your stove?

The bigger your cooktop and the more powerful your burners, the more heat your cooking will generate—and the more vent power you'll need. Also, if you tend to cook over several burners at one time, you'll want more power.

## How high will you mount the hood and what will its dimensions be?

For maximum exhaust performance, range hood manufacturers recommend installing the hood about 30 inches above the cooktop surface. If you plan to install the hood any higher than that (many cooks do), you'll need more airflow and therefore a more powerful hood. Another way to improve the hood's effectiveness is to buy a hood that extends beyond the sides and front of the cook top (and beyond the back in the case of an island installation).

## What extra features do you want?

Once you nail down the all-important power and mounting questions, you can consider other factors such as noise (measured in sones; the lower the number, the quieter the hood); lighting options; warming lamps; filter cleaning reminder lights; or remote control.

## Where will you mount the hood?

Mounting will probably be dictated by your kitchen layout. Hoods can be mounted under wall cabinets, on an exterior wall without cabinets, or dropped down from a ceiling for an island cooktop. If a hood isn't a practical design choice for you, consider downdraft ventilation, a more compact solution.

## How much power do you need in your hood?

Ventilation airflow is measured in cfm (cubic feet per minute), which refers to the amount of air the hood sucks in. The maker of your range can tell you how much power you need in a vent hood, or follow this simple formula to get a ballpark cfm figure: add up the maximum Btu capacity of all your gas burners and then divide by 100. (Btu is a measure of heat generated by the cooktop burners.) For example, a gas cooktop with four 15,000 Btu burners would need 600 cfm of vent power. If you add a griddle, grill, and extra burners, or as noted previously, if you install the hood more than 30 inches above the cooktop, you'll need to compensate with increased air flow (cfm) or greater hood area. (For electric cooktops, use 7,000 Btu per burner to calculate.)

Determining the appropriate airflow for your needs is key to proper ventilation. Too little cfm and the hood will be ineffective. But too much cfm can result in excess noise, as well as airflow problems in other parts of the house.

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## Winning tip

### How to spy sharp things in a sudsy sink

The next time you lose a sharp knife or skewer in your sudsy sink, don't fish around in the depths with your bare hands. Instead, get out a clear-bottomed bowl, baking dish, or glass and press its bottom into the water while you peer down into the open top. The vessel forces the soap bubbles out of the way so you can see what's at the bottom of the sink.

—Peg Dann, Lusby, Maryland

### A prize for the best tip

Attention clever cooks: We want your best tips—we'll pay for the ones we publish—and we'll give a prize to the cleverest tip in each issue. Write to Tips, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506 or email [fc@taunton.com](mailto:fc@taunton.com).

The prize for this issue's winner: A Chef'sChoice EdgeSelect Diamond Hone Professional knife sharpener; value, \$100.



### Cleaning broiler pans

After you remove cooked meat from the broiler pan, lay heavy-duty paper towels over the surface of the pan, dampen thoroughly with hot water, and let sit. When it's time for clean-up, you'll find that nearly all the cooked-on residue comes right off with the paper towels.

—Karen Herbst, Chicago, Illinois

### Not a grain down the drain

When rinsing basmati or Thai jasmine rice before cooking, it's easy to lose grains down the drain. To avoid this, I measure the amount of rice I need into a fine mesh strainer, which I set in a large bowl. I put the bowl in the sink and run cold water over the rice while stirring it gently. When the bowl fills with water, I lift out the strainer and pour out the starchy water. I continue rinsing until the water in the bowl runs clear.

—Irene Moretti, Ridgeville, Ontario



### A better way to stack up pizza dough

My family has been enjoying lots of grilled pizza, thanks to the recipes in "Grilled Pizza is Great for a Party" (*Fine Cooking* #66). I have one small improvement on the method: Put zip-top bags—instead of waxed paper or parchment, as directed in the recipe—between the layers of rolled-out dough. The bags can be wiped off and reused. It beats throwing away all that paper.

—Nanci Smith, Graham, Washington



## Freeze pesto in plastic egg cartons

I happened to have a clear plastic egg carton on hand when I tried Tony Rosenfeld's excellent basil pesto recipe ("Pestos: Basil & Beyond," *Fine Cooking* #66), and it was just the thing for storing the leftovers. I cleaned the carton, portioned the pesto into each egg cup, snapped the top shut, and stashed it in the freezer. It's really easy to pop the frozen pesto out of the cups when I want to stir some into pasta sauce.

—Sheila Davis, Ottawa, Ontario

## Twice-glazed bundt cake

When glazing a bundt cake, I put the cake on a wire rack set over a sheet of waxed paper. After I pour on the glaze, I quickly move the rack to another sheet of waxed paper, pick up the first sheet (which now holds a lot of excess glaze), and pour that glaze over the cake. This gives the cake an extra coating of yum.

—Michaela Rosenthal,  
Woodland Hills, California

## Keep melted butter from congealing in batter

In Carolyn Weil's article on baking with buttermilk (*Fine Cooking* #69, p. 22), she says that she uses vegetable oil instead of melted butter in her pancake recipe because she doesn't like how melted butter congeals when it meets cold

eggs and buttermilk. I have a way around this problem. When I make pancakes, I separate my eggs and mix the yolks with slightly cooled melted butter. The butter and yolks emulsify, which seems to keep the butter from congealing when the mixture encounters the cool milk.

—Cindy Hufler,  
Atlanta, Georgia

## Medicine dropper for exact extract

Pure vanilla extract has gotten quite pricey, and, unfortunately, when I pour it out of the bottle, I invariably lose several precious drops as they trickle down the side of the bottle. To prevent this, I bought a medicine dropper from the drugstore for less than \$1. I use it to measure out my precious extract.

—Roxanne Winston,  
Eugene, Oregon ♦

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# Sear, & Roast Sauce

Try this versatile technique for perfect browning and even doneness; then make a pan sauce for an extra hit of flavor

BY TONY ROSENFELD

If you've ever wondered how your favorite restaurant always seems to sear meat or fish just right—browned on the outside, moist and juicy on the inside—you should know that sear-roasting is the secret. It's a simple two-step technique for cooking small cuts like pork chops, beef tenderloin steaks, salmon fillets, or chicken breasts. First you sear the meat in a pan on the stovetop, which produces a rich, browned crust. Then transfer the whole pan to the oven and allow the meat to roast to an even doneness. As native as sear-roasting is to restaurant kitchens, it's just as easy to do in a home kitchen, even on a busy weeknight.

**High heat and patience pair for a perfect sear.** The first stage of sear-roasting is the most challenging. Properly searing meat demands courage and patience: courage to get a pan extremely hot before adding the meat, and then patience to leave the meat alone for a couple of minutes once it's added to the pan—no fiddling! During these first few minutes of searing, the meat forms a rich,

browned crust. Flipping or moving the meat prematurely will rob it of its browned crust. The meat might also be stuck to the pan if you try to move it too soon.

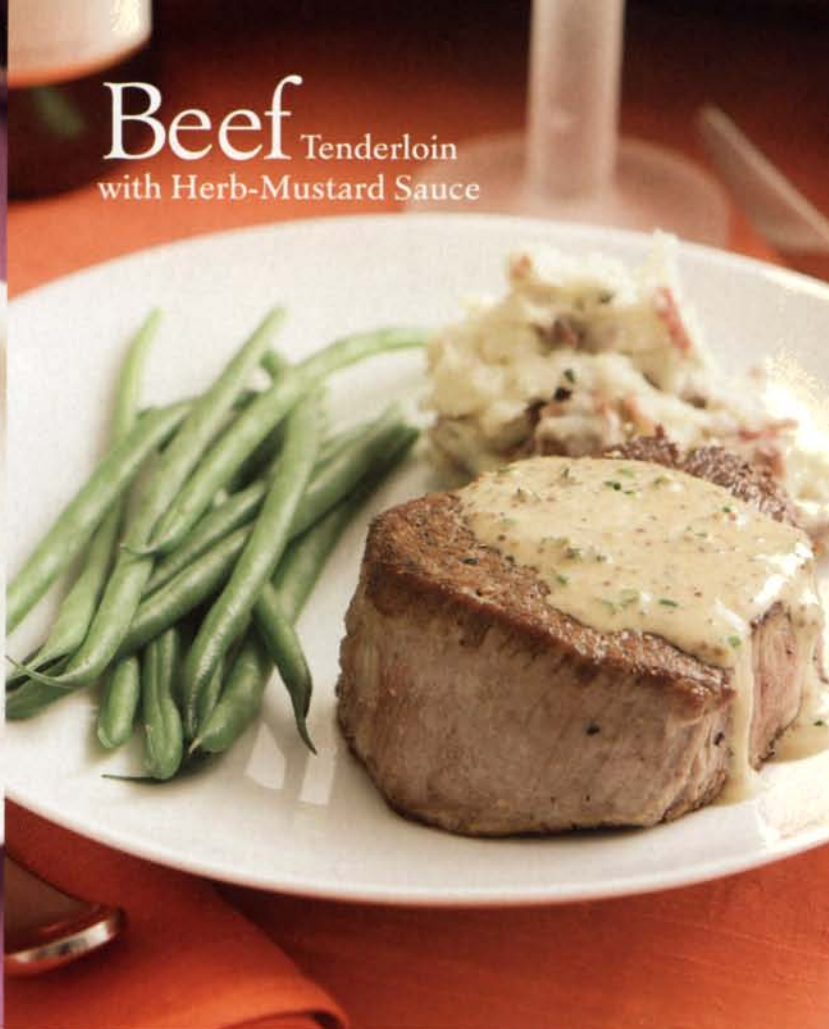
**A hot oven and an instant-read thermometer promise perfect doneness.** After browning the meat on the stovetop, you'll transfer the pan to a 425°F oven. The heat of the oven finishes cooking the meat evenly, ensuring that it will stay juicy. You can check doneness the old-fashioned way by poking and prodding the meat, though an instant-read thermometer (see *Where to Buy It*, p. 82) can be easier and more accurate. An instant-read thermometer gives accurate readings quickly, so you'll know just the moment to pull the pan out of the oven.

**Balance flavors and textures in the pan sauce.** Once the meat is out of the oven, transfer it to a plate to rest for a few minutes, which allows all the juices in the meat to redistribute and also gives you enough time to whip up a pan sauce.

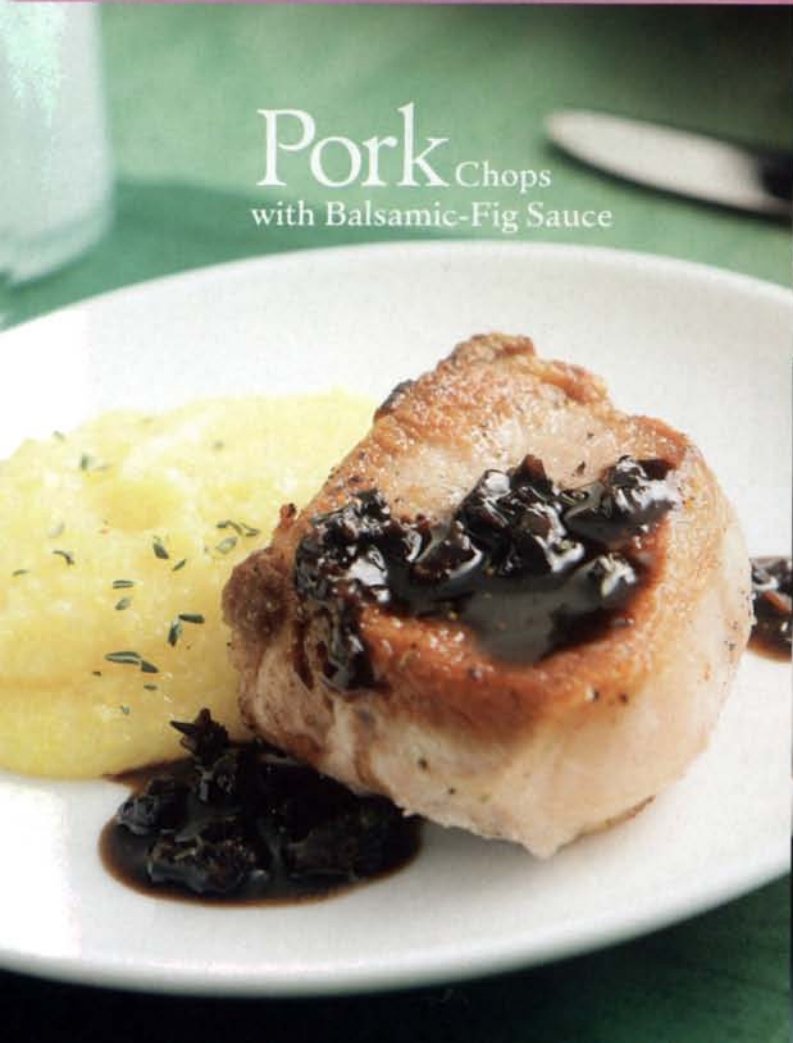
*(Continued on p. 38)*



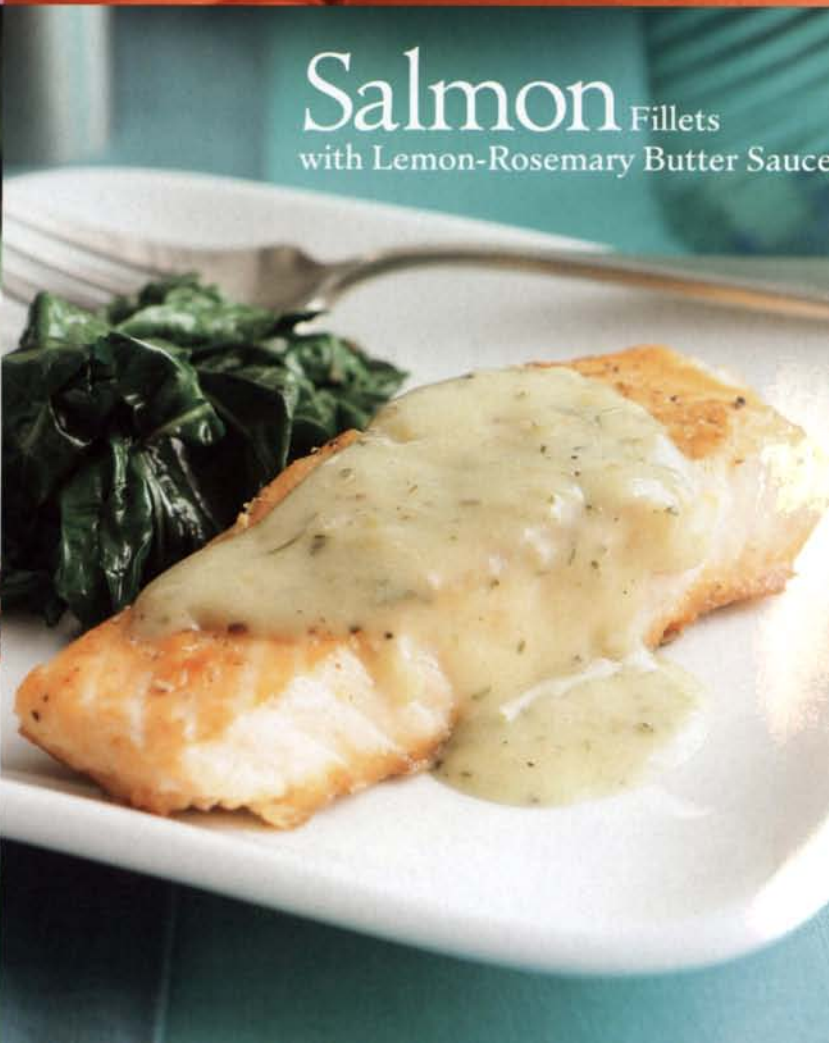
Chicken Breasts  
with Tomato & Red Wine Sauce



Beef Tenderloin  
with Herb-Mustard Sauce



Pork Chops  
with Balsamic-Fig Sauce

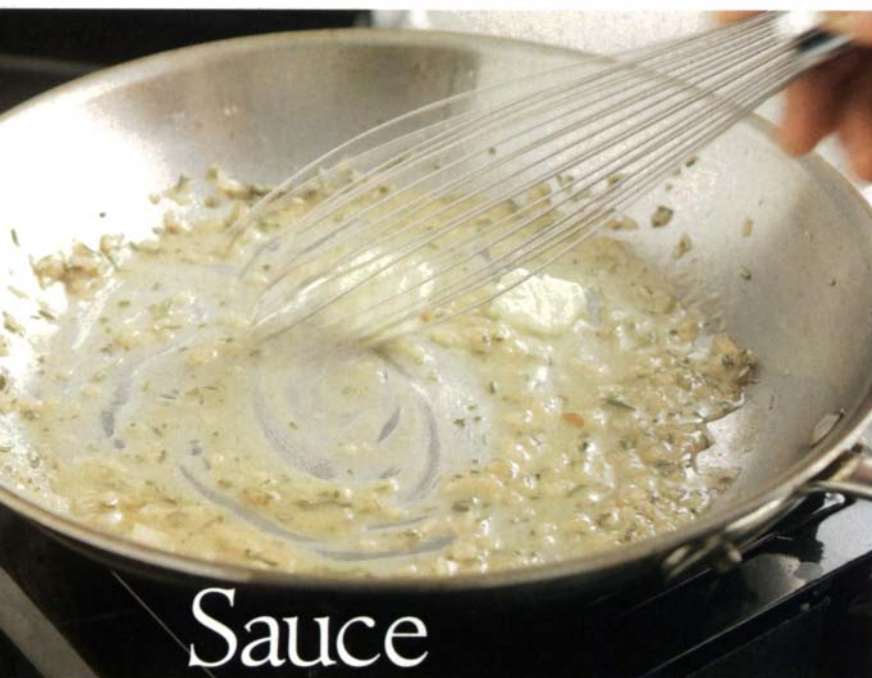


Salmon Fillets  
with Lemon-Rosemary Butter Sauce





For the best sear, don't disturb the fish or meat until it's had a few minutes to brown.



Build on the browned bits in the pan to make a flavorful sauce.

The base for your sauce is the browned bits on the bottom of the pan. The next layers of flavor come from vinegar or wine, which provide punch, and chicken or beef broth, which give the sauce body. By stirring with a wooden spoon, you combine these liquids with the delicious leftovers in the pan. (This process, known as deglazing, picks up the richness from the initial sear.) Cook the sauce until it has a glaze-like consistency. Then add fresh herbs, as well as butter or cream. The latter two balance

the acidity of the sauce and give it a velvety texture.

**Most tender cuts of meat or fish take to this sear-roasting technique.** Try lamb chops or even a trimmed rack of lamb. Sturdy fish fillets like tuna, halibut, and swordfish cook beautifully with this technique. Sear a whole chicken or chicken parts before roasting them to create an extra layer of rich flavor. You can also sear-roast firm vegetables like cauliflower or Brussels sprouts with great results.



Finish cooking in the oven. Use an instant-read thermometer to check doneness.

# Your guide to sear-roasting

## Master Sear-Roasting Recipe

Serves four.

Be sure that the oven has reached 425°F before starting to sear—most ovens take 20 to 30 minutes to heat up thoroughly.

**4 boneless chicken breasts, skinless salmon fillets, beef tenderloin steaks, or boneless pork chops (see the chart at right)**

**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

**2 tablespoons olive oil, canola oil, or peanut oil**

**Pan sauce ingredients (see the recipes on p. 40)**

Heat the oven to 425°F. Turn the exhaust fan on to high. Pat the meat or fish dry with paper towels. (Be sure the salmon is thoroughly dried.) Season both sides generously with salt and pepper (about 1 teaspoon of each total). Heat a 12-inch heavy-based ovenproof skillet over medium-high heat until a droplet of water vaporizes in 1 or 2 seconds, about 1 minute. (If the water skitters around the pan and doesn't evaporate, the pan is too hot; take it off the heat for about 30 seconds to cool.)

Add the oil, swirl it around the pan, and then evenly space the meat or fish in the pan. Cook without touching for 2 minutes. Using tongs (or a spatula for the fish), lift a corner of the meat or fish, check that it's both well browned and easily releases from the pan, and flip it over. (If it sticks or isn't well browned, cook for 1 to 2 more minutes before flipping.) Cook the second side for 1 minute and then transfer the skillet to the oven.

Roast until the meat or fish reaches the doneness you want (see the chart at right for doneness tests). Using potholders, carefully remove the pan from the oven, transfer the meat or fish to a large plate (don't wash the skillet), tent with foil, and let it rest while you prepare the sauce as described on p. 40.

## Timing & Temperature (oven at 425°F)

	Doneness temp/test	Roasting time	Pan sauce (see p. 40)
<b>Chicken</b>	<b>165°<sub>F</sub></b>	<b>5 TO 8 MINUTES</b>	<b>Tomato &amp; Red Wine Sauce</b>
4 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (about 1½ pounds)	Firm to the touch		
<b>Salmon</b>	<b>135°<sub>F</sub></b>	<b>4 TO 7 MINUTES</b>	<b>Lemon-Rosemary Butter Sauce</b>
4 skinless salmon fillets, (about 1½ pounds)	Slightly firm to the touch (for medium)		
<b>Beef</b>	<b>130°<sub>F</sub></b>	<b>4 TO 7 MINUTES</b>	<b>Herb-Mustard Sauce</b>
4 beef tenderloin steaks, (about 2 pounds)	Slightly springy to the touch (for medium rare)		
<b>Pork</b>	<b>145°<sub>F</sub></b>	<b>5 TO 8 MINUTES</b>	<b>Balsamic-Fig Sauce</b>
4 boneless center-cut pork chops, 1 to 1½ inches thick (2 to 2½ pounds)	Just firm to the touch		

## Choose a wide, heavy pan for sear-roasting

Select an ovenproof skillet at least 12 inches wide that will accommodate four chicken breasts, salmon fillets, pork chops, or tenderloin steaks in one batch. The heavier the pan, the more even the heat, and the less likely the meat will stick. Avoid nonstick pans for sear-roasting: They don't hold up well to high heat, and they won't brown the meat or fish as effectively.

## Be careful handling that pan

The handle of the skillet gets very hot during the roasting stage. Take care to use heavy dishtowels or potholders when removing the skillet from the oven and also while making the pan sauce.

## Tool tip

Sear-roasting fish demands a delicate touch. When flipping the salmon, use a fish spatula—its curvy, angled design lets it gently slide underneath the salmon and keep the fillet intact. For sources, see p. 82.



# Sauces for sear-roasted meat and fish

## Chicken

### Tomato & Red Wine Sauce

*Yields about 2/3 cup; enough for four servings.*

**1/2 cup red wine**

**1 14 1/2-ounce can diced tomatoes (preferably “petite-cut”), with their juices**

**2 tablespoons loosely packed chopped fresh oregano**

**Pinch crushed red chile flakes**

**1/3 cup freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano**

**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

After sear-roasting the chicken (see p. 39), pour off any excess fat from the skillet. Return the pan to high heat and add the red wine. Cook, scraping the pan with a wooden spoon to incorporate any browned bits, until the wine is reduced to a glazy film. Add the tomatoes with their juices and the red chile flakes; cook until the juices reduce to a saucy consistency, about 3 minutes. Stir in the oregano and Parmigiano; season generously with salt and pepper to taste. Serve immediately spooned over the sear-roasted chicken.

**WINE:** The flavor intensity brought out by searing, and the zippy flavors in the sauce, can handle a Chardonnay with some oak or a lighter Côtes du Rhône red.

## Beef

### Herb-Mustard Sauce

*Yields about 1/2 cup; enough for four servings.*

**3 tablespoons Cognac**

**1 cup homemade or low-salt beef or chicken broth**

**2 tablespoons heavy cream**

**1 1/2 tablespoons whole-grain mustard**

**2 tablespoons thinly sliced chives**

**1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme**

After sear-roasting the beef (see p. 39), pour off any excess fat from the skillet. Off the heat, add the Cognac and then return the pan to high heat. Cook, scraping the pan with a wooden spoon to pick up any browned bits, until the Cognac is almost completely reduced. Add the broth and cook until it's reduced to about 1/3 cup, about 5 minutes. Add the cream, mustard, chives, and thyme, stir well, and remove from the heat. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve immediately drizzled over the sear-roasted beef tenderloin.

**WINE:** The combination of lean beef, mustard, and herbs needs a red wine with medium-plus tannins and some herbal character: Go with a Cabernet blend.

## Pork

### Balsamic-Fig Sauce

*Yields about 1/2 cup, enough for four servings.*

**1 cup homemade or low-salt chicken broth**

**3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar**

**1/4 cup finely chopped dried figs**

**1 1/2 tablespoons honey**

**1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme**

**2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into four pieces**

**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

After sear-roasting the pork (see p. 39), pour off any excess fat from the skillet. Return the pan to high heat and add the chicken broth and balsamic vinegar. Cook, scraping the pan with a wooden spoon to incorporate any browned bits, until the broth is reduced to about 1/2 cup, about 5 minutes. Stir in the figs, honey, and thyme and cook until the sauce is reduced by another 1 to 2 tablespoons, about 1 minute. Add the butter and swirl it into the sauce until it's completely melted. Season with salt and pepper to taste and serve immediately, drizzled over the sear-roasted pork chops.

**WINE:** The sweet fruit elements and intense flavors in the sauce call for a wine with really ripe fruit, like Zinfandel or Shiraz.

## Salmon

### Lemon-Rosemary Butter Sauce

*Yields about 1/2 cup, enough for four servings.*

**3/4 cup dry white wine**

**3 tablespoons finely diced shallot (about 1 large)**

**1 teaspoon chopped rosemary**

**6 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into small cubes**


**1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice**

**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

After sear-roasting the salmon (see p. 39), pour off any excess fat from the skillet. Using a large wad of paper towels, blot any remaining oil from the pan but leave any browned bits. Return the pan to high heat and add the wine, shallot, and rosemary. Cook, stirring, until the wine is almost completely evaporated, 3 to 4 minutes. Remove from the heat and whisk in the cubes of butter, adding a few at a time until they're all thoroughly incorporated and the sauce is thick and creamy looking. (If the butter is slow to melt, set the pan over low heat.) Stir in the lemon juice, season with salt and pepper to taste, and serve immediately, spooned over the sear-roasted salmon.

**WINE:** The big flavor brought on by searing, coupled with the richness of the butter, means this salmon can handle a dry rosé or light red, like Pinot Noir.

Tony Rosenfeld is a contributing editor to *Fine Cooking*. ♦



*A squeeze of lemon, a dash of Dijon, and a bit of butter make a savory glaze for quick-braised carrots, asparagus, and green beans.*

# Quick-Braising Vegetables

For long-cooked flavor in a flash, try this easy technique for delicious asparagus, green beans, and carrots

BY SUSIE MIDDLETON

**S**taring into the vegetable drawer of my refrigerator, once again I'm thinking, "What can I do with those beautiful carrots that's just a little bit different?" It's Monday night, and I don't have a lot of time, but I want something tasty. Solution: a quick braise. For many of the vegetables we like to eat most around my house—especially asparagus, green beans, and carrots—a quick braise is just the thing for delivering slow-cooked flavor fast.

A quick stovetop braise for vegetables is a cross between sautéing and braising. By browning the vegetables first and then simmering them briefly to finish, I get the sweet caramelized flavor of a sauté and the pleasing texture and more complex flavor of a braise.

For weeknights, I use the simplest version of the technique to cook vegetables fast. In 20 minutes or less, I can prep and cook a simple side dish that has lots more flavor than your average steamed vegetable.

For weekend cooking, I add more ingredients to create more complex flavors. The technique is really versatile. By adding more aromatic ingredients at each stage of browning, simmering, and finishing the vegetables, I can design a custom braised vegetable dish to go with whatever I'm serving. It takes a bit more time, but it's worth it. To get familiar with your range of options, try the basic technique on p. 42 and then experiment with the more elaborate recipes that follow.



# A delicious side dish in 20 minutes



prepping:  
10 minutes



browning:  
6 minutes



simmering:  
2 minutes

This recipe is great for weeknights. When you have more time, use the technique as a springboard to create more complex dishes (see pp. 44-45).

## Quick-Braised Vegetables

*Serves two to three.*

### Fresh vegetables—choose from:

- ❖ 1 pound medium or thick asparagus;
- ❖ 1 pound (1 bunch) carrots;
- ❖  $\frac{3}{4}$  pound green beans; or
- ❖ 1 pound total mix of carrots, beans and asparagus

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

1 tablespoon unsalted butter

Scant  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon kosher salt

$\frac{1}{3}$  cup homemade or low-salt chicken broth

1 to 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice

1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

Trim the vegetables following the sidebar at far right. If you have a scale, weigh the vegetables after trimming: you should have 10 ounces trimmed asparagus, 10 ounces trimmed green beans, 12 ounces peeled and trimmed carrots, or 10 ounces total of a mix of all three trimmed vegetables. If you don't have a scale, spread the vegetables in a 10-inch straight-sided sauté pan to see if you have about the right amount; they should cover the bottom of the pan with a minimum of overlapping (a little bit is fine, as the vegetables will shrink as they cook).

Heat the olive oil and 2 teaspoons of the butter in a 10-inch

straight-sided sauté pan over medium-high heat. Be sure the pan you choose has a lid. When the milk solids in the butter are just beginning to turn a nutty brown, add the vegetables and salt and toss well with tongs. Arrange the vegetables in one layer (or as many as possible in one layer). Cook without stirring until the bottoms are nicely browned, 3 to 4 minutes. Toss and turn over, and cook for another 2 minutes to lightly brown another side. Pour in the chicken broth, immediately cover the pan, and simmer until the liquid has almost completely evaporated, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat,

# or less



finishing:  
1 minute

add the lemon juice, Dijon, and remaining 1 teaspoon butter and toss to combine well with the vegetables, scraping any browned bits from the bottom of the pan with a heatproof spatula or wooden spoon. Serve right away as individual servings or pour and scrape the contents of the pan onto a small platter and serve family style.

#### VARIATIONS:

**Add:** 3 medium shallots, peeled and halved. Put them in the pan with the vegetables at the start, and do not remove.

**Add:** 2 or 3 sprigs fresh thyme and rosemary, tied together in a little bundle. Put the bundle in with the vegetables at the start and remove just before adding the Dijon and lemon juice.

**Substitute:** 1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar and 1 tablespoon orange juice for the Dijon and lemon juice.

For even cooking,  
trim the vegetables  
to a uniform size



#### Carrots

**Shopping:** Choose young, slim carrots with their bright leafy tops on.

**Trimming:** Trim the tops and tails and peel the carrots. Cut them in half crosswise and

then cut the thicker end in half lengthwise to get pieces of about the same width, no more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch (the length can vary).



#### Asparagus

**Shopping:** Choose medium or thick asparagus ( $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch wide). Don't use thin spears for braising—they will overcook.

**Trimming:** Cut off the tough ends so that all the spears are about 6 to 7 inches long.



#### Green beans

**Shopping:** Choose fresh young green beans (but not ultra-thin ones) as close to uniform thickness as possible.

**Trimming:** Cut away any brown spots. Trim off the stem end (and the tail end, if wilted).





### **Braised Carrots, Red Onions & Bell Peppers with Ginger, Lime & Cilantro**

*Serves three to four.*

- ¾ pound fresh young carrots, preferably with the tops on**
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice**
- 1 teaspoon freshly grated lime zest**
- 1 teaspoon light brown sugar**
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter**
- Kosher salt**
- 4 ounces yellow bell pepper (about 1 small, cored and seeded), cut lengthwise into ½-inch strips**
- 4 ounces red onion (about 1 small), cut into ½-inch wide strips**
- 1 piece fresh ginger, 2x¾ inches, cut into thin matchsticks (a scant ¼ cup)**
- ½ small fresh jalapeño, cored but not seeded, cut crosswise into slices about ¼ inch thick**
- ⅓ cup plus 2 tablespoons homemade or low-salt chicken broth**
- ¼ cup loosely packed chopped fresh cilantro**

Trim the tops and tails from the carrots and peel them; you should have about 8 ounces trimmed carrots. Cut them in half crosswise and then cut the thicker end in half lengthwise to get pieces of about the same width, no more than ¾ inch (the length can vary). In a small bowl, combine the lime juice, lime zest, and brown

sugar; set aside. Heat 1 tablespoon of the olive oil and 2 teaspoons of the butter in a 10-inch straight-sided sauté pan over medium-high heat. When the milk solids in the butter are just beginning to turn a nutty brown, add the carrots and ¼ teaspoon salt. Toss well with tongs and then arrange the carrots in one layer. Cook without stirring until the bottoms are nicely browned, 3 to 4 minutes. Toss and turn over, and cook for another 2 minutes to lightly brown another side. Transfer the carrots to a plate with tongs.

Heat the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil in the pan. Add the bell pepper, red onion, and a pinch of salt and sauté until browned, 3 to 5 minutes. Add the ginger and jalapeño, toss, and sauté for another 1 minute. Return the carrots to the pan, stir, and pour in the chicken broth. Immediately cover the pan and simmer until the liquid is almost completely reduced, about 2 minutes.

Uncover the pan, remove it from the heat, and add the lime juice mixture, the remaining 1 teaspoon butter, and the cilantro. Toss to combine well, scraping any browned bits from the bottom of the pan with a heatproof spatula or a wooden spoon. Serve right away as individual servings or pour and scrape the contents of the pan onto a small platter and serve family style.

## Variations on a braise

The quick-braised vegetables on p. 42 are easy and simply flavored. The recipes on these pages use the same technique but layer on more flavor along the way. They take a bit more time, but they're delicious.



## Braised Green Beans with Ham & Mushrooms

*Serves three to four.*

**¾ pound green beans**  
**⅓ cup homemade or low-salt chicken broth**  
**3 tablespoons brandy**  
**1 tablespoon unsalted butter**  
**3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**  
**Kosher salt**  
**6 ounces cremini mushrooms, thickly sliced (about 2 cups)**  
**2 ounces shaved ham, coarsely chopped (about ⅔ cup)**  
**3 to 4 sprigs fresh thyme, tied with kitchen twine**  
**3 tablespoons heavy cream**  
**Freshly ground black pepper**

Cut away any brown spots from the beans, and trim off the stem ends (and the tail ends, if wilted); you should have about 10 ounces of trimmed beans. Combine the broth and brandy; set aside. Heat the butter and 1 tablespoon of the oil in a 10-inch straight-sided sauté pan over medium-high heat. When the milk solids in the butter are just beginning to turn a nutty brown, add the beans and ¼ teaspoon salt. Toss well with

tongs and then arrange the beans in one layer. Cook without stirring until the bottoms are nicely browned, 3 to 4 minutes. Toss and turn over and cook for another 2 minutes to lightly brown another side. Transfer the beans to a plate with tongs.

Heat the remaining 2 tablespoons oil in the pan. Add the mushrooms and a pinch of salt and let cook without stirring until nicely browned on one side, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the ham and cook, stirring once or twice, until the ham and mushrooms are nicely browned, another 2 to 3 minutes. Return the beans to the pan, add the thyme, toss, and pour in the chicken broth and brandy. Immediately cover the pan and simmer until the liquid is almost completely reduced, 2 to 3 minutes. Uncover, add the cream and a few grinds of pepper, and cook for a few seconds longer, just to thicken the cream so that it coats the vegetables. Remove the pan from the heat. Serve right away as individual servings or pour and scrape the contents of the pan (except the thyme) onto a small platter and serve family style.



## Braised Asparagus & Cipolline Onions with Pancetta & Balsamic Butter Glaze

*Serves three to four.*

To learn about cipolline onions, see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 73.

**1 pound medium or thick asparagus**  
**2 teaspoons balsamic vinegar**  
**2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice**  
**1 teaspoon Dijon mustard**  
**1 teaspoon honey**  
**2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**  
**1½ ounces thinly sliced pancetta, cut into slivers (about ⅓ cup)**  
**1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon unsalted butter**  
**5 ounces small cipolline onions (about 6) or large shallots (about 6), halved and peeled (quartered if very large)**  
**Kosher salt**  
**⅓ cup homemade or low-salt chicken broth**

Cut off the tough ends of the asparagus so that all the spears are about 6 to 7 inches long; you should have about 10 ounces trimmed asparagus. Combine the balsamic vinegar, lemon

juice, Dijon, and honey in a small bowl; set aside. Heat 1 tablespoon of the oil in a 10-inch straight-sided sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add the pancetta strips and cook, stirring frequently, until browned and crisp, 2 to 3 minutes (don't let them burn). Take the pan off the heat and transfer the pancetta to a plate, leaving behind as much fat as possible.

Return the pan to medium-high heat, add 1 tablespoon of the butter to the fat in the pan and swirl to melt (there will be browned bits on the bottom of the pan). Add the onions and a pinch of salt and sauté until nicely browned on all sides and beginning to soften, 2 to 3 minutes. Take the pan off the heat and transfer the onions to another plate.

Return the pan to medium-high heat and add the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil, the asparagus, and ¼ teaspoon salt. Toss well with tongs. Cook without stirring until the bottoms of the

spears are nicely browned, 3 to 4 minutes. Toss and turn over, and cook for another 1 to 2 minutes to lightly brown another side. Return the onions to the pan, stir, and pour over the chicken broth. Immediately cover the pan and simmer until the liquid is almost completely reduced, about 3 minutes.

Uncover, add the balsamic and Dijon mixture, stir to coat thoroughly, and cook for a few seconds until it has a glazy consistency. Add the remaining 1 teaspoon butter and toss to melt and combine, scraping up any browned bits in the pan with a heatproof spatula or a wooden spoon. Toss in the crisped pancetta. Serve right away as individual servings or pour and scrape the contents of the pan onto a small platter and serve family style.

*Susie Middleton is the editor of Fine Cooking.* ♦





# To Each Rice, Its Own Cooking Method

How to bring out the best  
in basmati, brown, and  
medium-grain white rice

BY RAGHAVAN IYER

I've been told that my first mouthful of solid food as an infant was a small bowl of white basmati rice, drizzled with clarified butter and sprinkled with salt. So, it's hardly surprising that I consider rice my favorite starch. But I don't love rice simply because it's a comfort food from my childhood; I love rice because its delicious yet unobtrusive flavor and appealing texture makes it an ideal starting point for a seemingly endless range of side dishes.

Of all the rice varieties I've sampled, the three most appealing to my way of cooking are the Indian or Pakistani white basmati, long-grain brown, and medium-grain white. (Conveniently, these varieties are also widely available across the United States.) When cooked just right, as you may well know, each has its own unique appeal, much of which has to do with texture. What you might not realize, though, is that that there are several ways to cook rice and, for every variety, some methods yield better results than others. In the following three recipes, I've paired a different technique with each variety to get great results.

## To rinse, or not to rinse?

Rinsing isn't necessary with packaged brands of American-grown white rice. But if you bought your rice from a bulk bin, if it's imported from Asia, or if it came in a burlap-type bag, do rinse the rice before cooking. (It's best to rinse all basmati, too.) As long as the rice isn't fortified with minerals, you don't have to worry about washing away nutrients.





*Fragrant dried spices and fresh mint enhance the full flavor of basmati rice.*

## Basmati rice — the pilaf method



With its low starch content and long, slender grains, basmati rice takes beautifully to the pilaf method, which allows for maximum expansion of the grains as they cook up **light and separate**. Washing and soaking the grains before cooking makes the rice even less starchy, helping you achieve perfect single-grained and fluffy results. **PILAF METHOD BASICS:** With the pilaf method, the rice is first sautéed in oil along with aromatics and spices. Then a measured amount of liquid is added, the mixture is brought to a simmer, covered, and left to cook until the rice absorbs the liquid.

### White Basmati Rice Pilaf with Whole Spices, Saffron & Mint

*Yields about 4 cups; serves six.*

- 1 cup uncooked white basmati rice, preferably Indian or Pakistani**
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil**
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds**
- 6 green or white cardamom pods**
- 2 cinnamon sticks (3 inches each)**
- 2 fresh or dried bay leaves**
- 1 medium red onion, cut in half and thinly sliced lengthwise**
- 2 teaspoons kosher or sea salt**
- ¼ teaspoon saffron threads**
- 1 cup firmly packed fresh mint leaves (from about 3 ounces mint sprigs), finely chopped**

Put the rice in a bowl and gently rinse with three or four changes of water, until the water runs fairly clear. Fill the bowl halfway with cold water and let the rice soak at room temperature for 30 minutes to soften the kernels. Drain.

Heat a 3-quart saucepan over medium-high heat; pour in the oil and swirl it around. It should appear to shimmer; if not, continue heating until it does. Add the cumin, cardamom, cinnamon, and bay leaves, which will sputter and crackle and smell aromatic. After 20 to 30 seconds, add the onion and cook, stirring frequently, until the onion turns golden brown, about 5 minutes.

Add the drained rice and toss gently with the onion and spice mixture. Pour in 1½ cups cold water and sprinkle on the salt and saffron. Stir the rice just once to incorporate the salt and saffron. Leaving the pot uncovered, bring the water to a boil over the same medium-high heat. After about 3 minutes, when much of the water has evaporated or been absorbed (if you move some of the rice with a fork, the water should look like it comes about halfway up the rice), stir the rice once more to bring the partially cooked layer from the bottom of the pan to the surface. Cover the pan with a tight-fitting lid and turn down the heat to the lowest possible setting. Cook covered for another 10 minutes. Without removing the cover, turn off the heat and let the pan stand off the heat, undisturbed, for another 10 minutes.

Remove the lid and add the mint. Fluff the rice with a fork to let the steam escape and to incorporate the mint leaves. Remove the cinnamon sticks and bay leaves and instruct your guests not to eat the cardamom.



*The golden raisins in the dressing give this dish a hint of sweetness.*

## **Brown Rice Salad with Basil & Pistachios**

*Yields about 6 cups; serves six to eight.*

- 1 cup uncooked long-grain brown rice**
- ½ cup golden raisins**
- ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons mild-tasting olive oil**
- ¼ cup red-wine vinegar**
- ½ cup raw unsalted pistachio nuts**
- 1 small red onion, finely diced**
- 4 medium to large cloves garlic, finely diced**
- 1 15-ounce can chickpeas, drained, and rinsed**
- 1 medium red bell pepper, cored, seeded, and finely diced**
- 1 teaspoon kosher or fine sea salt; more to taste**
- 1 teaspoon crushed red chile flakes**
- ½ cup firmly packed fresh basil leaves, cut into thin strips (chiffonade)**

Fill a medium saucepan with water and bring it to a boil over high heat. Add the rice and return to a boil. Cook, uncovered, until the rice grains are cooked and tender but still a little chewy, 20 to 25 minutes. Drain the rice through a sieve and rinse with cold water to stop the cooking. Set aside.

While the rice is cooking, purée the raisins, ¼ cup of the oil, and the vinegar in a blender, scraping the jar as needed, to make a thick, smooth vinaigrette.

Heat a 10-inch skillet over medium-high heat and toast the pistachios, stirring frequently, until they brown in spots and give off a strong nutty aroma, about 2 minutes. Transfer them to a cutting board. When cool enough to touch, chop them coarsely.

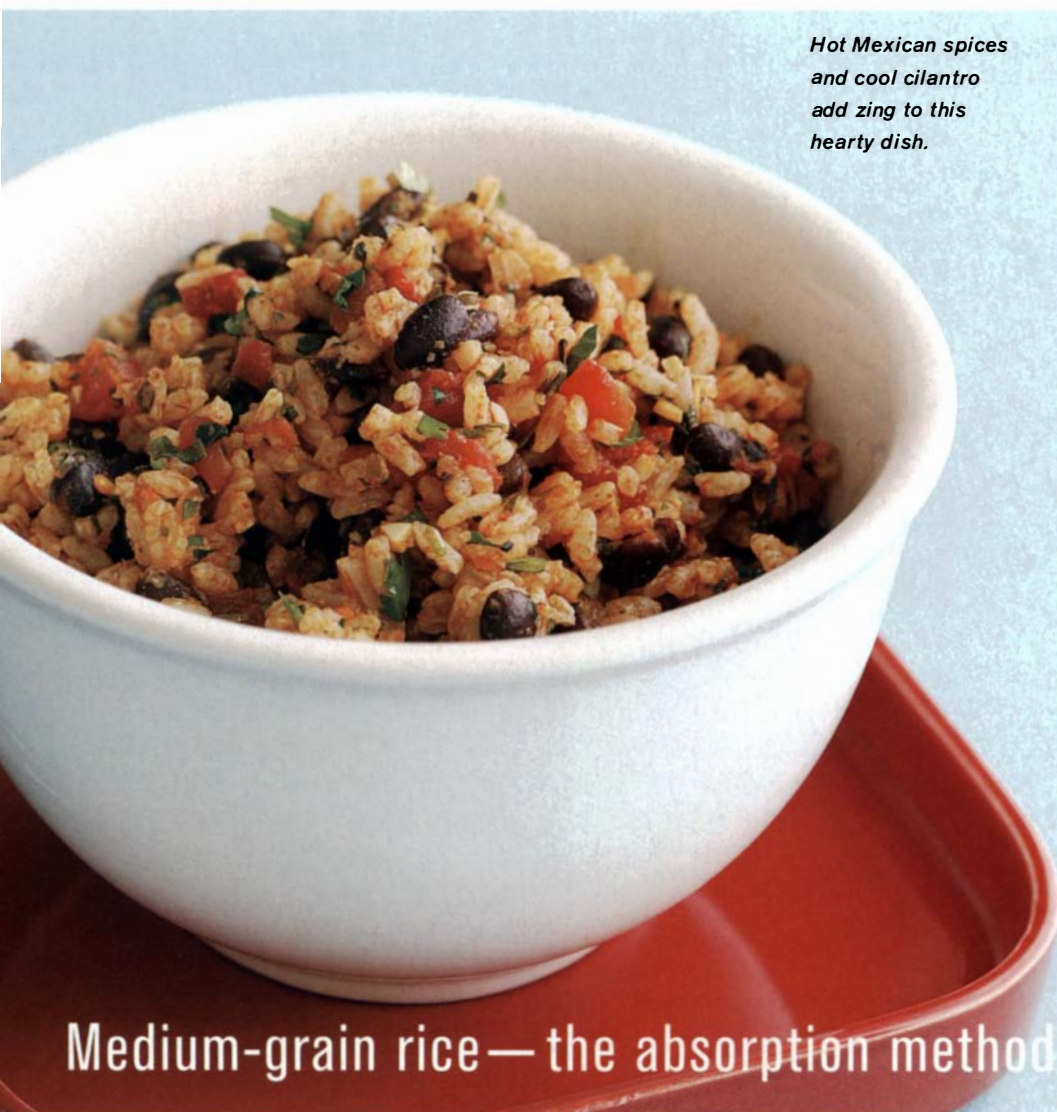
Heat the remaining 2 tablespoons oil in the same skillet over medium-high heat until very hot. Stir-fry the onion and garlic until honey brown, 2 to 3 minutes. Scrape this into a large bowl along with the pistachios, vinaigrette, chickpeas, bell pepper, salt, and red chile flakes. Add the rice to the bowl and fold the ingredients together. The salad can be served at room temperature or chilled. Just before serving, fold in the basil, taste, and season with more salt, if you like.

## **Brown rice—the pasta method**



Cooking brown rice by the pasta method is quick and results in **tender, separate grains with a nice chewy bite**, instead of mushy, split-open kernels that often result when this variety is cooked in a covered pot. Unlike white rice, brown rice kernels still have their bran layer and germ intact, so they have a nutty, grainy character and are rich in complete proteins, minerals, and vitamins. The germ contains some oil, so to avoid rancidity, buy in small quantities and store it in the fridge.

**PASTA METHOD BASICS:** Like pasta, the raw rice goes into a large pot of boiling water and cooks uncovered. When the grains reach the desired tenderness, the water gets poured off.



*Hot Mexican spices and cool cilantro add zing to this hearty dish.*

## Medium-grain rice—the absorption method



When cooked using the absorption method, medium-grain rice yields a **tender, starchy, slightly creamy** kernel that's ideal for saucy rice dishes like the Mexican Tomato Rice & Beans at right. This method also ensures that the valuable fortified nutrients remain in the pot with the rice. **ABSORPTION METHOD BASICS:** The rice cooks in a measured amount of water in a tightly covered pot so that by the time the rice is tender, all the water has been absorbed. As the water level drops, trapped steam finishes the cooking. Instead of a pot, you can use a rice cooker; just follow the manufacturer's directions.

### Mexican Tomato Rice & Beans

*Yields 6 cups; serves six to eight.*

- 1 cup uncooked medium-grain white rice**
- 1 14½-ounce can diced tomatoes (preferably “petite-cut”)**
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- 6 medium cloves garlic, finely chopped**
- 1 medium fresh jalapeño, cored and finely chopped (if you like spicy foods, leave in the ribs and seeds; if not, remove them)**
- 1 15-ounce can black beans, drained and rinsed**
- 2 teaspoons kosher or fine sea salt**
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin**
- 1 teaspoon chili powder**
- ¼ cup finely chopped fresh oregano leaves and tender stems**
- ¼ cup finely chopped fresh cilantro leaves and tender stems**

In a 1-quart saucepan, combine the rice with 2 cups cold water. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, cover, reduce the heat to low, and cook for 20 minutes. Remove from the heat and let the pan stand, covered, for another 5 minutes.

While the rice steams, set a fine sieve in a bowl and drain the can of tomatoes. Pour the tomato juices into a 1-cup liquid measure. Add enough water to the tomato juices to equal 1 cup.

Heat a 10- to 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Pour in the oil and stir-fry the garlic and jalapeño until the garlic browns and the jalapeño smells pungent, about 1 minute. Add the black beans, salt, cumin, and chili powder; stir two to three times to incorporate the mixture and cook the spices, about 30 seconds. Stir in the tomato juice and water mixture and bring to a boil. Adjust the heat to maintain a gentle boil and cook, stirring occasionally, until the beans absorb much of the liquid, 5 to 7 minutes. Add the tomatoes, oregano, cilantro, and cooked rice and cook, stirring occasionally, until the rice is warm, 1 to 2 minutes. Serve immediately.

*Raghavan Iyer is the author of The Turmeric Trail: Recipes & Memories from an Indian Childhood. ♦*



True classic

# The Best Ever Spaghetti & Meatballs

BY FRANK PELLEGRINO

I love spaghetti, and I love meatballs. I smell a good meatball frying—I don't care what time of day it is—I've got to eat it. I don't know anyone who can resist a good spaghetti and meatballs for lunch or supper. And I know people who eat it cold out of the fridge for breakfast.

The spaghetti and meatballs we make at Rao's, my family's restaurant, are the best. The marinara sauce we use was my Uncle Vincent's recipe. The meatball recipe is from my grandmother—a great cook—who

handed it down to my Aunt Anna, the head chef at Rao's for twenty years.

I'm going to tell you how to make this dish the way it's been done for generations in my family, and the way we're still making them at Rao's (we've been in business since 1896).

**First you start the marinara sauce**, which is really easy. You just simmer canned Italian tomatoes with garlic and olive oil until they're slightly thickened. I usually buy whole tomatoes, but you can use

crushed if you want: It would take a genius to figure out the difference in taste.

**While the sauce is simmering, you start making the meatballs.** I use a mixture of ground beef, pork, and veal—equal amounts of all three—plus eggs, grated cheese, breadcrumbs, parsley, and garlic. I don't use much garlic because I also use it to flavor the frying oil. You put too much garlic in, it will repeat on you; you'll taste it six hours later. And I don't like that. That's not good cooking to me.





## Marinara Sauce

*Yields about 7 cups.*

**3 28-ounce cans Italian plum tomatoes, whole or crushed (I like San Marzano)**  
**½ cup olive oil**  
**6 cloves garlic, lightly smashed**  
**1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons kosher salt**  
**¼ cup chopped fresh basil**  
**1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**  
**¼ teaspoon dried oregano**

If you're using whole tomatoes, put them in a large bowl and crush

them with your hands. Discard any cores.

In a 7-quart or larger saucepot, heat the oil on medium heat. Add the garlic and sauté until lightly golden brown, about 2 minutes. Add the tomatoes and salt. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer, stirring occasionally, for 45 minutes to 1 hour; the sauce will reduce and thicken slightly but shouldn't get too thick. Stir in the basil, pepper, and oregano. Proceed with the spaghetti and meatballs recipe, or let cool and refrigerate for up to four days.

Next you shape the ground meat into big, beautiful meatballs and fry them in oil so they're nicely browned all over and cooked through. By the time you're done with that, the marinara will be ready. You add the meatballs to the sauce and simmer them together so their flavors intermingle. Meanwhile, boil the pasta until it's just about al dente.

**The next step is called the *segreto* method, and it's the key to the whole dish.** In Italian, *segreto* means "secret." After you drain the spaghetti (don't rinse it, that's nonsense) you put it back in its cooking pot. You add a couple of ladlefuls of sauce to the pasta, put it over high heat, and toss until each piece is fully coated. What's happening is the spaghetti is finishing cooking in the marinara. Now every piece of pasta is flavorful because it's permeated and integrated with the sauce. That's the secret to finishing your spaghetti and meatballs.

*Frank Pellegrino is a co-owner of Rao's restaurant in East Harlem, New York.*

## Spaghetti & Meatballs

*Serves four to six; yields twelve beautiful meatballs.*

If you can't buy the ground meats individually, use 1½ pounds of meatloaf mix, which is often available in supermarkets.

### Marinara Sauce (recipe at left)

**½ pound ground beef**  
**½ pound ground pork**  
**½ pound ground veal**  
**1 tablespoon kosher salt**  
**½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**  
**1 clove garlic, minced, plus 1 clove garlic, lightly smashed**  
**2 large eggs, lightly beaten**  
**1 cup finely grated imported Locatelli Romano or Parmigiano Reggiano (or half and half); more for serving**  
**1½ cups plain dry breadcrumbs**  
**1½ cups water**  
**1 tablespoon chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**  
**1 cup olive oil or vegetable oil; more as needed**  
**1 pound dried spaghetti**  
**¼ cup chopped fresh basil**

Start making the marinara sauce. While it's simmering, make the meatballs.

Break up the ground meat into a large bowl. Sprinkle on the salt, pepper, minced garlic, eggs, grated cheese, breadcrumbs, water, and parsley. Mix with your hands until everything is nicely distributed, but don't overmix. Shape into twelve meatballs by gently scooping up a handful of meat and rolling it into a nice even ball; each meatball should weigh about 4 ounces and be about 2½ inches in diameter.

In a 10-inch nonstick skillet, heat the olive oil and the lightly smashed garlic clove over medium heat. (If your skillet is larger than 10 inches, you'll need to add more oil; there should be enough to come about halfway up the sides of the meatballs.) When the garlic is lightly browned, the oil should be hot enough to start frying. (Remove the garlic from the oil once it becomes fully browned.) Gently set six of the meatballs in the oil and fry until they're lightly browned on the bottom half, 5 to 6 minutes. Carefully turn them over using a slotted spatula and brown the other side. Drain the meatballs on a few paper towels to



**Pat, don't pack. Scoop up a handful of meat and gently roll it in your palms to make a large, smooth meatball.**



**The secret to perfectly sauced spaghetti: Ladle some sauce onto the drained pasta and cook over high heat so the pasta absorbs the sauce.**

soak up excess oil. Fry the remaining six meatballs the same way.

When the marinara has finished its initial simmer and you've seasoned it, add the meatballs to the simmering sauce and cover the pot. Simmer them together for 30 minutes to let the sauce permeate the meatballs and the meat flavor infuse the sauce.

Meanwhile, bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. When the meatballs and sauce have been simmering for about 20 minutes, add the spaghetti to the boiling water and boil until it's just about al dente.

When the spaghetti is done, drain it and return it to the pot it was cooked in. Add the chopped fresh basil and a couple of ladlefuls of the marinara sauce to the spaghetti. Put the pot over high heat and, with a wooden spoon or tongs, constantly toss the pasta until each piece is coated with sauce, about 1 minute. Transfer to serving bowls and ladle more sauce over the spaghetti, along with two to three meatballs (or transfer the meatballs to a serving platter and set it on the table). Serve with grated cheese. ♦



# 3 Chefs Cook Leg of Lamb 3 Ways

**L**eg of lamb is the classic spring roast. And these days, you can buy leg of lamb in a variety of different cuts—the traditional bone-in version, the boneless rolled and tied leg, and the large flat version sold as butterflied leg of lamb, to name a few. Depending on the cut you choose, there are plenty of different ways to cook it. Curious to know what professional chefs would do with these interesting options, I asked three award-winning chefs—an American, an Italian, and an Australian—to develop a recipe they'd like to serve to family and friends. Each chef's take was deliciously different. Boston chef Gordon Hamersley bathed a butterflied leg of lamb in a curry marinade and cooked it on the grill. Umberto Menghi took a classic Tuscan approach, encrusting a whole bone-in leg with dried cherries and herbs and roasting it to juicy perfection. And Australian Luke Mangan rolled a boneless roast around a mint, pine nut, and currant stuffing, served with a zippy red onion jam on the side.

—Kimberly Y. Masibay, associate editor



## Grilled Butterflied Leg of Lamb with Garlic & Curry Spices

*Serves eight to ten.*

7 cloves garlic  
2 teaspoons kosher salt  
1 tablespoon coriander seeds,  
cracked or coarsely ground  
1½ tablespoons sweet curry powder  
2 tablespoons finely chopped  
fresh ginger  
1 cup dry sherry  
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil  
3 tablespoons honey

1 tablespoon freshly cracked  
black pepper  
1 boneless butterflied leg of lamb,  
3 to 5 pounds, trimmed of excess  
fat, rinsed, and patted dry  
6 sprigs fresh cilantro, roughly  
chopped

**Prepare the lamb:** Finely chop the garlic, sprinkle the salt over it, and mash with the flat side of the knife to make a paste.

Put the cracked coriander and curry powder in a cold, dry sauté pan and set it over medium-low heat. Shake the pan





*This curry-infused lamb is delicious with sautéed kale or chard and steamed couscous.*

# Butterflied for grilling

My wife, Fiona, and I love to grill whole butterflied leg of lamb. It's perfect for low-key entertaining because some sections of the meat cook to medium rare, others medium, and still others medium well—so everyone's taste is sure to be satisfied. Because the meat is relatively thin, butterflied lamb cooks much faster than a traditional leg, and the large flat cut of meat practically begs to be rubbed with flavorings or doused in marinade. I seasoned my version here with garlic, curry spices, ginger, and honey. Curry and lamb are a classic pairing, but my approach is a bit irreverent, since I grill the meat rather than stew it in the traditional manner. Not to worry—the result is fantastic.



## What to shop for:

Butterflied leg of lamb has been completely boned and cut open into one large, flat sheet. Choose a fairly lean piece with medium- to deep-red meat and little connective tissue. To make the cut easier to handle, separate it into smaller pieces at the seams, if you like.



## Gordon Hamersley

The chef-owner of Hamersley's Bistro in Boston, Gordon Hamersley is the author of the award-winning book, *Bistro Cooking at Home*.

## drink choices

A young, fruity Zinfandel, such as the 2003 Seghesio Sonoma (\$16) or the 2002 Dashe Cellars Dry Creek Valley (\$22), would complement the flavors of this dish well.

a few times while the spices toast until they have a strong nutty smell, 1 to 3 minutes. Don't let them burn.

In a small bowl, mix the garlic paste, toasted spices, ginger, sherry, olive oil, honey, and pepper until the mixture resembles a somewhat thin, grainy soup.

If you like, separate the lamb along its natural seams into smaller, easier-to-handle pieces. Put the lamb in a shallow nonreactive baking dish and pour the marinade over the meat. Cover with plastic wrap, set aside, and let the flavors penetrate the meat for

2 hours at room temperature (or up to 24 hours in the refrigerator). Turn the meat twice during the marinating time.

**Grill the lamb:** Prepare a medium-hot charcoal fire or gas grill. Grill the lamb (covered if using a gas grill, uncovered if using charcoal) on one side until nicely charred, about 10 minutes. Turn the meat over and continue grilling (again, covered if using a gas grill, uncovered if using charcoal) until an instant-read thermometer inserted into a thick section of the meat registers

130° to 135°F for medium rare, 7 to 12 minutes, depending on what type of grill you use. (If you like your lamb cooked to medium, continue grilling until the meat's temperature reaches 140° to 145°F; for medium well, 150° to 155°F.) Transfer the lamb to a tray or carving board and let it rest for 8 to 10 minutes. Carve the lamb across the grain into ¼-inch slices. Arrange the slices on a platter, drizzle with the juices that accumulated during resting, and sprinkle with the cilantro before serving.





*A dried cherry and breadcrumb crust is a perfectly sweet complement for the earthy flavor of the lamb.*

### **Roasted Leg of Lamb with Dried Cherry, Mustard & Herb Crust**

*Serves eight to ten.*

6- to 7-pound bone-in leg of lamb  
4 cloves garlic, cut lengthwise into quarters  
Kosher salt  
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil  
2 cups (10 to 11 ounces) dried sweet cherries, soaked in 1 cup hot water for 30 minutes

½ cup (1 ounce) fresh white breadcrumbs  
2 tablespoons Dijon mustard  
1 tablespoon coarsely chopped fresh rosemary  
1 tablespoon coarsely chopped fresh sage  
1 teaspoon freshly cracked black pepper  
2 medium carrots, peeled, halved lengthwise, and cut into 2-inch lengths  
2 ribs celery, halved lengthwise and cut into 2-inch lengths

1 medium yellow onion, peeled and quartered  
1½ cups sweet red vermouth, such as Martini & Rossi  
1½ cups homemade or low-salt beef or chicken broth

Position a rack in the lower middle of the oven and heat the oven to 450°F.

Trim any excess fat from the lamb. With the point of a knife, make 16 slits all over the lamb and insert a sliver of garlic into each slit. Sprinkle 1 teaspoon salt over the meat.



# Roasted with a crust

In Tuscany, we traditionally serve a whole roast leg of lamb for spring celebrations: Easter, a wedding engagement, a baptism. The meat is rich and flavorful and, of course, when you roast a whole leg, there's plenty for everyone gathered around the table. This roast is coated with a crust of dried cherries and herbs that's a delicious complement to the flavor of the meat. Tuscans are big on cherries; everyone has a cherry tree growing next to the olive tree. If you look at historic cookbooks, you'll find recipes similar to this dating back to the days of the Medicis, when dried fruits were stored in the attic and used for cooking in winter and early spring. I serve this roast with braised fennel and roasted red potatoes. Where the English like mint with lamb, Tuscans like fennel—and, of course, cherries.



**What to shop for:** Choose a 6- to 7-pound whole leg of lamb, covered with firm, creamy-white fat. (Crumbly, brittle, yellowish fat is a sign of age.) Before you take the leg home, ask the butcher to trim off most of the visible fat, but to leave the shank end on.



## Umberto Menghi

Chef and cookbook author Umberto Menghi owns five restaurants in British Columbia and the Villa Delia Hotel & Cooking School in Tuscany.

Turn on the exhaust fan. Heat 2 tablespoons of the oil in a large, heavy flameproof roasting pan over medium-high heat. When the pan is hot, sear the roast until browned lightly on at least the two widest sides. Transfer the meat to a tray or platter and then carefully pour the hot fat out of the pan.

Put the dried cherries with their soaking liquid, the breadcrumbs, mustard, rosemary, sage, 1 teaspoon salt, the pepper, and the remaining 2 tablespoons oil in a food processor and pulse to make a coarse, wet paste.

Scatter the carrots, celery, and onion in the roasting pan to make a bed for the lamb. Pat about a third of the cherry paste onto the bottom of the roast (the wide side closest to the bone). Set the roast bottom side down on the vegetables. Pat the remaining paste evenly on the rest of the lamb. Put the pan in the oven and set a timer for 25 minutes.

After 25 minutes, lower the heat to 375°F and roast until the tempera-

ture at the thickest part of the meat is 125° to 130°F for medium rare, another 35 to 45 minutes (or longer if you prefer medium or well-done lamb). Check the roast periodically to be sure the cherry crust isn't getting too dark; if it is, drape a piece of foil loosely over the lamb. Transfer the meat to a carving board or serving platter. Cover the lamb with a sheet of aluminum foil (not too tight, or the meat will steam) and let rest for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, set the roasting pan over two burners on medium high, leaving the carrots, celery, onion, and any fallen-off crust in the pan. Add the sweet vermouth and broth. Stir and scrape the bottom of the pan with a wooden spoon and let the liquid simmer until it reduces to about 1 cup of slightly thickened sauce, 8 to 10 minutes. Season the sauce with salt and pepper to taste. Pour the sauce through a fine sieve into a serving bowl. Stir and press gently on the solids in the sieve to free the sauce, but don't break up the solids or

force them through the sieve. Discard the solids.

To serve the lamb, carve 1/2-inch slices, (see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 74), discarding the garlic pieces as you come across them. Some of the flavorful crust will fall off while you carve—just spoon it up and serve it alongside the meat. Arrange the sliced lamb on a large serving platter or individual plates and drizzle with the sauce.

## drink choices

Nothing could complement a robust meat dish like this better than a young, fruity Chianti classico, such as the 2002 Castello di Gabbiano (\$15) or the 2002 San Felice (\$15).



# Stuffed boneless roast



## Luke Mangan

One of Australia's hottest chefs, Luke Mangan is the owner of Salt Restaurant, Bistro Lulu, and Moorish Restaurant & Bar, and the author of two cookbooks.



### What to shop for:

A boneless rolled and tied leg of lamb cooks evenly and is easy to carve. To add a stuffing, untie the twine, fill, and then roll and tie again (see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 74).

In spring, lamb is one of my favorite foods. I'm particularly fond of the boneless leg because it lets me have fun with flavorful stuffings. Mint always works well with lamb, so I rolled the meat around a simple stuffing of fresh mint and parsley, toasted pine nuts, and dried currants, and secured the roast with kitchen twine. (For a demonstration of rolling and tying, see the video at [www.finecooking.com](http://www.finecooking.com).) The roast goes into the oven seam side up because I want to encourage crunchy bits of stuffing to form along the seam as the lamb roasts—they're far too good to miss. The herb stuffing infuses the meat with flavor and helps keep it moist. Served with red onion jam, this roast feels thoroughly modern but with a respectful nod toward tradition, much like the food at my restaurants.

## Boneless Leg of Lamb with Mint, Pine Nut & Currant Stuffing

*Serves six to eight.*

- ½ cup dried currants**
- ½ cup tawny Port, or as needed**
- 1 cup toasted coarse breadcrumbs (to make, see p. 73)**
- ½ cup lightly packed coarsely chopped fresh mint**
- ½ cup lightly packed coarsely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- ½ cup pine nuts, toasted to a light golden brown**
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten (the eggs won't be cooked hotter than 130°F, so if salmonella is a concern, use pasteurized eggs, or omit the eggs)**
- 3- to 4-pound boneless rolled and tied leg of lamb**
- Red Onion Jam (recipe at right)**

In a small bowl, soak the currants in enough Port to cover for at least 2 hours and up to overnight.

When ready to roast the lamb, drain the currants; discard the Port. Position a rack in the lower middle of the oven and heat the oven to 400°F.

In a large bowl, mix the bread crumbs, mint, parsley, olive oil, pine nuts, and currants. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Add the beaten eggs and mix well.

Untie the lamb and unroll it. Lay the meat flat and pat dry with paper towels. Trim any excess fat and, if necessary, butterfly portions of the lamb to make it roughly rectangular and evenly thick (see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 74, for details). Sprinkle the inside of the lamb with salt and pepper and pat the stuffing evenly over the meat. Roll up the lamb tightly, from one short end to the other, and tie the roast snugly at 1-inch intervals with kitchen twine.

Sprinkle the outside of the lamb with more salt and pepper and then set it, seam side up, on a rack in a small roasting pan. Gather up any stuffing that escaped and poke it back in at the ends of the lamb roll. Roast until an instant-read thermometer inserted into a thick part of the roast reads 125° to 130°F (for medium rare), 60 to 70 minutes. Let rest for 15 minutes and then carve into medium-thin slices. Serve topped with the red onion jam.

## Red Onion Jam

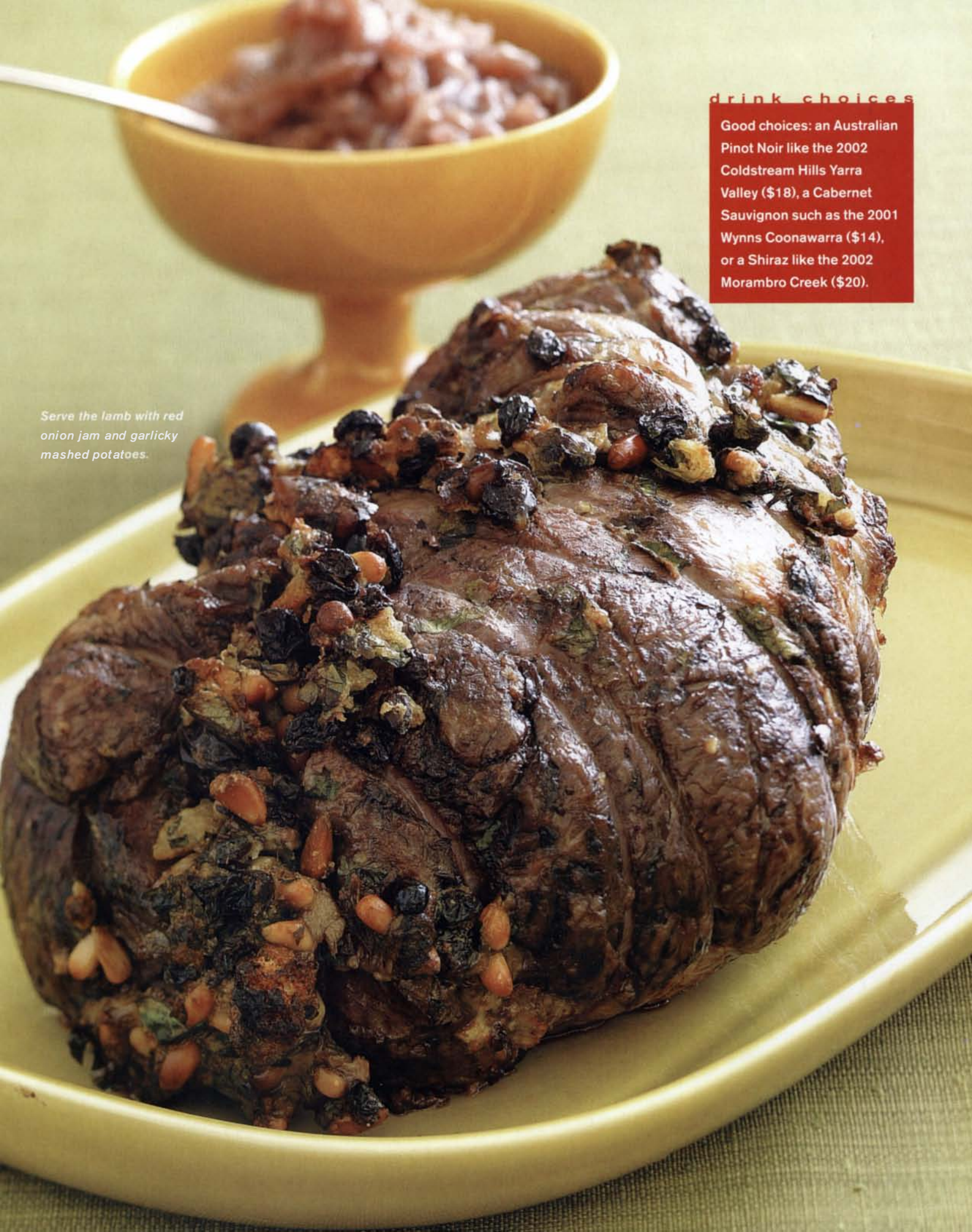
*Yields about 1½ cups.*

Make this jam while the lamb roasts. Or make it a day ahead and refrigerate; warm it gently before serving.

- 7 tablespoons unsalted butter**
- 2 medium-large red onions, halved and thinly sliced crosswise into half moons (about 6 cups)**
- ½ cup dry white wine**
- 6 tablespoons honey**
- 3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar**
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper**

Melt the butter in a heavy-based 3- or 4-quart saucepan over medium heat. Add the onions and cook, stirring occasionally, until they're very soft and stringy looking but not brown, 12 to 15 minutes. (Reduce the heat to medium low if they start to brown.) Add the wine and honey, reduce the heat to medium low if you haven't already, and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the mixture is thick and jammy, another 20 to 30 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in the vinegar; season with salt and pepper to taste. ♦





*Serve the lamb with red onion jam and garlicky mashed potatoes.*

#### drink choices

Good choices: an Australian Pinot Noir like the 2002 Coldstream Hills Yarra Valley (\$18), a Cabernet Sauvignon such as the 2001 Wynns Coonawarra (\$14), or a Shiraz like the 2002 Morambro Creek (\$20).



# Three Steps to

**H**aving made countless batches of french fries, both at home and in restaurant kitchens, I'm convinced that real fries are best left to the pros—unless you happen to own a deep fryer. For the rest of us, the best way to indulge our appetite for the crisp, salty goodness of french fries is by making oven fries instead. These oven fries are every bit as irresistible as their deep-fried counterpart. The secret is a simple three-step process: rinse, parboil, roast.

## **Rinse and parboil now; roast later.**

Rinsing the sliced potatoes in cold water washes away surface sugars and helps the fries form a crisp (rather than leathery) exterior. A quick boil in salted water before roasting ensures that the potatoes will cook all the way through by the time the outsides are handsomely golden. This step also fluffs up the starches, making the fries less likely to get soggy. Once the potatoes are parboiled, you can let them sit for up to an hour on paper towels while you answer the door, finish the main course, serve cocktails, or do whatever

else needs to be done. The idea for cooking the potatoes in two stages, by the way, comes from the British, who make the best roasted potatoes on earth by first parboiling them and then roasting them in a preheated pan at a relatively high temperature.

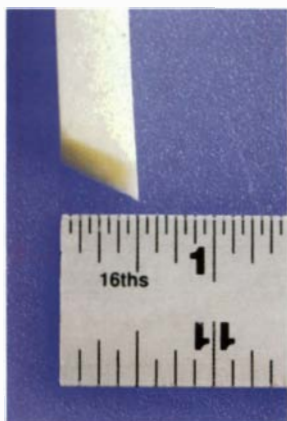
## **Heat the oven and the baking sheet.**

When you're ready to roast the fries, toss them with a bit of oil (I prefer olive oil, but you could use peanut or vegetable oil) and spread them on a hot baking sheet. Thoroughly heating the oven and the baking sheet provides an initial blast of heat that helps the fries crisp evenly. Be sure to leave space between the fries so they get crisp on all sides.

**Add salt while the fries are hot.** The instant the fries come out of the oven, sprinkle them with your favorite salt (I like fleur de sel) or a flavored salt like the lemon-fennel salt at far right. Oven fries are excellent with nothing more than salt, but it certainly won't hurt to sprinkle them with malt vinegar, or to dip them in mayonnaise or ketchup.

## Great oven fries begin with russet potatoes and a ruler

To get the most satisfying ratio of crunchy, salty exterior to fluffy, potatoey interior, choose high-starch baking potatoes, or russets, and cut them lengthwise into ½-inch square sticks or batons (a little thinner is fine, but don't go wider). It helps to shop for long, evenly shaped russets, but don't worry if each fry isn't perfect; a little variation in the size of the fries is nice.



# Perfect Oven Fries

BY MOLLY STEVENS

Crisp outside, fluffy inside

## Oven Fries

*Serves four.*

This recipe is easily doubled; just use a second baking sheet so you don't crowd the fries.

**2 large russet potatoes (about 1¾ pounds total), peeled and cut lengthwise into ¼- to ½-inch-thick sticks**

**Kosher salt**

**2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**

**Fleur de sel or other coarse salt, or Lemon-Fennel Salt (below right)**

**1 Rinse the potatoes:** Choose a pot large enough to hold the potatoes without crowding (4 to 5 quarts) and fill it with cold water. Drop the potato sticks into the water to rinse off the starch. You can immediately remove the potatoes from the water and proceed to the next step. Or if you want to prep the potato sticks in advance and roast them later in the day, you can leave them in the water. If you plan to wait more than 2 hours before roasting the fries, however, put the pot in the refrigerator.

**2 Parboil the potatoes:** Drain the potatoes, rinse well, and return them to the pot with enough cold water to cover by 1½ inches. Add 1 teaspoon kosher salt. Partially cover the pot, and bring the water to a boil over high heat. As soon as the water boils, reduce the heat to a calm boil and boil for 3 minutes. Gently drain the potatoes in a large colander and then spread them on paper towels to dry. (The

potatoes can sit for up to an hour before roasting.)

**3 Roast the fries:** When you're ready to roast the fries, put a baking sheet on the middle oven rack and heat the oven to 450°F. Put the potatoes in a large bowl, add the olive oil, and toss to coat the potatoes, being careful not to break the sticks. Remove the hot baking sheet from the oven and arrange the potatoes on the sheet, leaving at least ½ inch between each. Roast, turning the fries over and rotating the baking sheet once after 15 minutes and then again every 6 to 8 minutes, until the fries are nicely browned and crisp, a total of about 30 minutes. Sprinkle with fleur de sel or lemon-fennel salt, toss gently, and serve immediately.

## Lemon-Fennel Salt

*Yields about 1 tablespoon.*

**½ teaspoon fennel seeds**  
**½ teaspoon coriander seeds**  
**¼ heaping teaspoon white peppercorns**  
**1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest**  
**½ teaspoon kosher salt**

Toast the fennel, coriander, and peppercorns in a small, dry skillet over medium heat until fragrant, about 2 minutes. Pour into a mortar or spice grinder and grind to a fine powder. In a small dish, combine the lemon zest and salt with the spices. (This salt will keep in the refrigerator for up to three days.)



*Molly Stevens is the co-author of One Potato, Two Potato and the author of All About Braising.* ♦



# Caramelized Onions

## Sweet Rewards for Slow Cooking

BY TONY ROSENFELD

If you were one of those restless kids who couldn't help charring marshmallows over the campfire, making caramelized onions might not be for you. The process of gently browning onions, though simple and straightforward, does demand patience—about 40 minutes' worth of stirring and watchfulness—but this culinary restraint is amply rewarded. Slow cooking transforms a sharp raw onion into an intensely flavored ingredient that can dress up everything from a quick pasta to a rich pan sauce. Make the onions on the weekend, when you have an hour to spare, or when you're working in the kitchen, and then use them in the following recipes or in creations of your own over the course of the week.

**A shortcut speeds up the cooking.** While patience is a prerequisite for making caramelized onions, I do like to get a running start by wilting the onions quickly over medium-high heat and seasoning them early on with salt to draw out their moisture. Then I turn down the heat to medium low and stay patient as the onions slowly brown.

**Don't stray far from the stovetop.** Caramelizing onions toes a tricky line between browning and burning. It's

important to stir every couple of minutes to work the browned bits on the bottom of the pan into the rest of the onions. Just in case the onions start to burn, I keep some water on hand so I can add a few tablespoons. I generally don't need it, though, as with practice, I've developed a feel for the heat of my stovetop and for how often to stir the onions. You will, too.

One way to ensure the most even browning is to use a radial cut when slicing the onions. By slicing onion halves on an angle, rather than straight down, you get pieces of similar length and width that will cook at the same rate.

**Simple dishes let the sweetness of the onions shine through.** I like to make a large batch of caramelized onions since there are so many different ways to use them, and they keep in the refrigerator for about a week. The onions are great in stews and braises. Try pairing them with canned chicken broth to make an improbably easy onion soup.

As you'll see in the recipes and ideas on p. 62, you can work caramelized onions into whatever you're making for dinner tonight for a touch of deep, earthy sweetness.

**Make them ahead,  
then stir them into  
weeknight meals  
for deep flavor fast**

For even slices,  
use a radial cut

Halve the onion and notch out the ends.

Start cutting thin slices at a low angle and follow the natural curve of the onion.

Adjust the angle of your knife as you slice; it should be at 90 degrees when you reach the middle.

Flip the onion over and repeat.



Pile the onions into a big pan.



Stir up browned bits from the pan.



Earthy sweetness  
at the ready.

## MASTER RECIPE

### Caramelized Onions

*Yields about 1 1/2 cups.*

This recipe has been developed for a 12-inch skillet. If you use a 10-inch skillet, reduce the recipe proportionally by about one quarter.

**2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**  
**2 1/2 pounds Spanish onions or large yellow onions, peeled, trimmed, halved, and thinly sliced lengthwise, preferably using a radial cut as shown in the photos at left (about 9 cups)**

**1 teaspoon kosher salt**

Heat the oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until it immediately bubbles when an onion touches it, about 1 minute. Add the onions, sprinkle with the salt, and cook, stirring frequently, until they wilt completely and begin to stick to the bottom of the pan, 10 to 20 minutes (much of the onions' moisture will evaporate and the pan will begin to brown; the cooking time varies with the onions' moisture content). Reduce the heat to medium low and cook, stirring and scraping the pan with a wooden spoon every few minutes. (If the pan begins to look like it's burning, add 2 tablespoons water, stir, and lower the heat a bit.) Cook, stirring and scraping and adding water as needed, until the onions are a uniform caramel brown, another 30 to 45 minutes. (If they haven't begun to brown much after 20 minutes, raise the heat to medium.) Add a couple of tablespoons of water and scrape the pan well. Use right away or spread the onions on a baking sheet and let cool to room temperature. Store in the refrigerator for up to one week.

## reader review

A *Fine Cooking* reader gave this recipe a real-world test. Here are the results:

*"Having these caramelized onions on hand was a great way to make quick, full-flavored dishes in very little time. Also, since I occasionally cook for vegetarian friends, I can see how these onions could be used to create rich, satisfying dishes using no meat, just the onions, for a full flavor base."*

—Paul Parenteau, Portland, Oregon



# Quick meals from caramelized onions



## Layer in deep flavor fast

Caramelized onions perk up nearly any **sandwich**—especially roast beef.

Use the onions to top a **pizza**, along with crumbled blue cheese, crisped bacon, and sautéed greens.

Make a quick **pasta** sauce with caramelized onions, sautéed sausage, tomatoes, and chopped fresh rosemary.

Make a delicious **pan sauce** after sautéing pork chops or chicken cutlets by adding the onions to the pan while deglazing with wine or broth.

Sauté **spinach** with garlic and then fold in caramelized onions and grated Parmigiano Reggiano.

Or try **topping** a burger or grilled chicken with the caramelized onions.

## Gemelli with Asparagus & Caramelized Onions

*Serves four.*

**3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**  
**¼ pound pancetta**, cut into ¼-inch dice  
**1 pound asparagus**, trimmed, peeled if thick, and cut on the diagonal into 2-inch pieces  
**Kosher salt** and freshly ground **black pepper**  
**¾ cup (about half a batch) caramelized onions** (see the recipe on p. 61)  
**¾ cup homemade or low-salt chicken broth**  
**¾ pound dried gemelli or penne**  
**¾ cup freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano**  
**1 teaspoon sherry vinegar or balsamic vinegar**

Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil. Meanwhile, put 2 tablespoons of the oil and the pancetta in a 12-inch skillet or sauté pan and cook over medium heat, stirring, until the pancetta begins to brown and renders much of its fat, 5 to 7 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the pancetta to a plate lined with paper towels. Raise the heat to medium high, add the asparagus, and season with ¼ teaspoon salt. Stir often until the asparagus starts to brown, about 3 minutes. Add the caramelized onions and chicken broth, reduce the heat to medium low, cover, and cook until the asparagus is tender, about 4 minutes. Stir in ¼ teaspoon pepper and set aside in a warm spot.

Cook the pasta in the boiling water, stirring often, until it's just tender, about 11 minutes. Reserve ¼ cup of the pasta water. Drain the pasta and add it to the pan with the asparagus. Set the pan over medium-high heat and toss well. Add ½ cup of the Parmigiano, the vinegar, and the cooked pancetta and continue cooking, stirring, for 1 minute to meld all the flavors. If the pasta begins to dry, add the reserved pasta water. Serve with a drizzle of the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil and a sprinkling of the remaining Parmigiano.



## Braised Chicken with Caramelized Onions, Mushrooms & Sun-Dried Tomatoes

*Serves three to four.*

This quick, saucy dish is great over polenta, pasta, rice, or risotto.

**½ pound white button mushrooms** (or large white mushrooms, quartered)  
**Kosher salt** and freshly ground **black pepper**  
**2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**  
**1 tablespoon unsalted butter**  
**1½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts**, cut into 2-inch chunks  
**1 cup all-purpose flour** for dredging  
**¾ cup homemade or low-salt chicken broth**  
**¾ cup (about half a batch) caramelized onions** (see the recipe on p. 61)  
**6 oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes**, drained and thinly sliced  
**1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar**  
**¼ teaspoon Tabasco sauce**  
**¼ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**

In a medium bowl, toss the mushrooms with ½ teaspoon salt and a few grinds of pepper. Heat the oil and butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat until the butter melts and most of its foam cooks off, about 1 minute. Meanwhile, season the chicken with ¾ teaspoon salt and a few generous grinds of pepper. Spread the flour on a large plate and lightly dredge the chicken. Sauté the chicken pieces, flipping after 2 minutes, until they're lightly brown on both sides, about 4 minutes total (it's all right if the sides of the chicken are still raw). Add the mushrooms and cook, stirring, until they start to soften and brown in places, about 3 minutes. Add the chicken broth, caramelized onions, and sun-dried tomatoes. Bring to a boil and then reduce to a gentle simmer. Cover and cook until the chicken is firm to the touch and cooked through (check by slicing into one of the thicker pieces) and the mushrooms are tender, about 6 minutes. Stir in the vinegar, the Tabasco, and half of the parsley. Taste for salt and pepper and serve sprinkled with the remaining parsley.

*Tony Rosenfeld is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking.* ♦

# Cioppino

## A Savory Seafood Stew

BY JOHN ASH

**L**ike many cooks who call northern California home, I've had a long love affair with cioppino. Californian by way of Italy, cioppino was brought to San Francisco by fisherman from Genoa. Romantic legend has it that fisherman made this stew on board their boats as they returned to Fisherman's Wharf with their catches, through the Golden Gate into San Francisco Bay. (But if you've ever been on the Bay, you know it can be rough: The idea of a big pot of hot, simmering stew on a small boat seems dangerous to me.) Cioppino isn't derived from one specific recipe, but there are some definite guidelines for a delicious and authentic result.

**Cioppino is all about a tasty broth—and a mix of seafood.** The broth—stock, tomatoes, and wine—can be made a day or two ahead. I like to do this in quantity and store it in the freezer, which means that I can finish this recipe in about half an hour. In the broth, the combination of tomatoes and wine makes for bright, zippy flavors that are the perfect partner to the fish.

**For a flavorful stock, use this quick trick.** Most cioppino recipes call for fish stock, which can be hard to find or keep on hand. But I've included a simple

**This San Francisco classic is a succulent mix of shellfish and white fish in a brightly flavored broth**

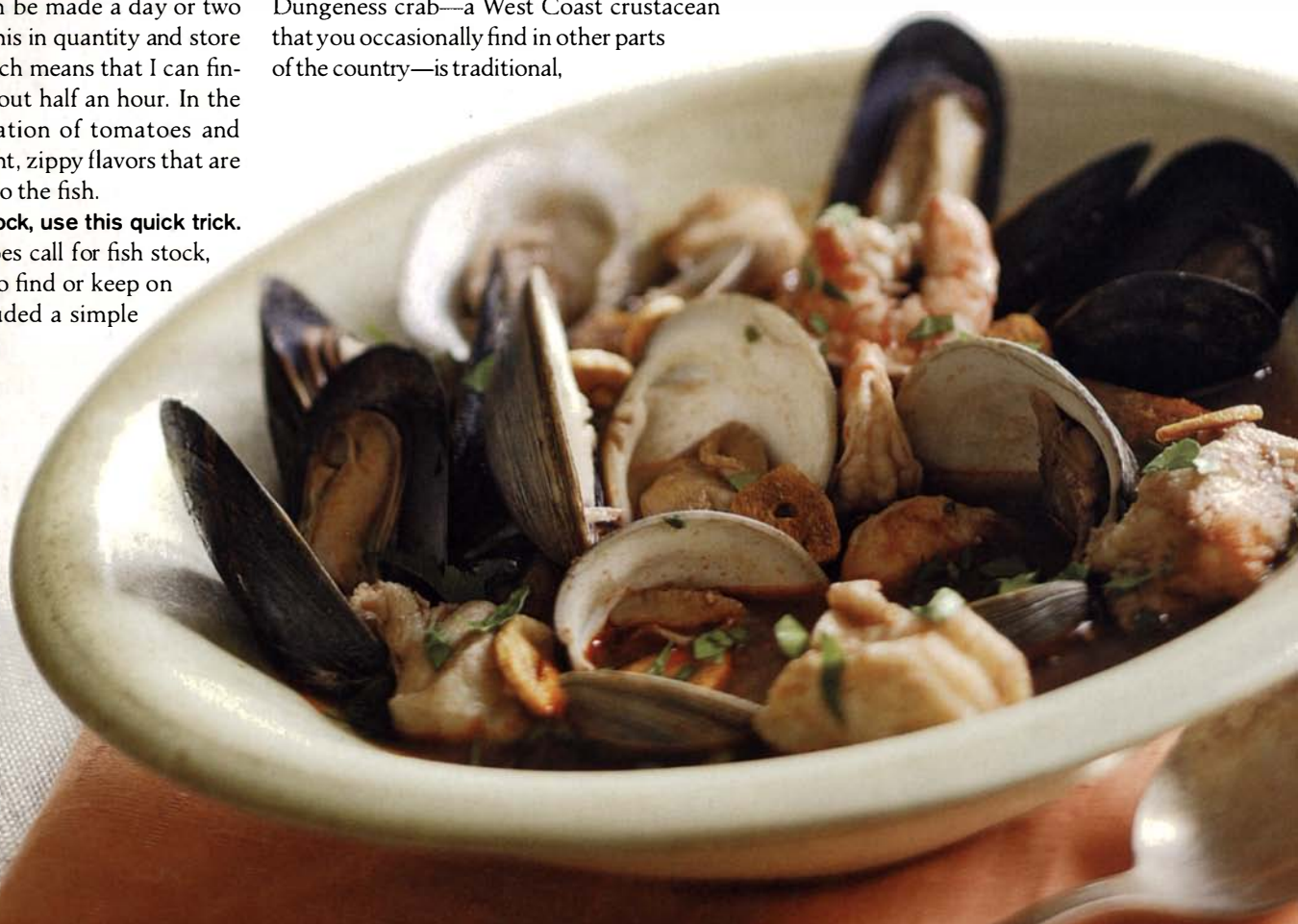
recipe on p. 64 for turning ordinary canned chicken stock into a flavorful shellfish stock using shrimp shells. You'll often encounter the suggestion of bottled clam juice as a substitute for fish stock. I'm not a big fan of the stuff since I find it's often very salty and sometimes gritty.

**Use a balance of fresh fish and shellfish.** You'll see suggestions in the box on p. 65. Dungeness crab—a West Coast crustacean that you occasionally find in other parts of the country—is traditional,

but it isn't a requirement. Your best bet is using the freshest seafood you can find.

When you finish the stew, add the fish and shellfish in stages according to how long each one needs to cook. The recipe direction "until just barely cooked through" is important here because the fish will continue to cook as it sits in the warm broth when you portion it out.

The infused garlic oil, garlic chips, and sourdough crouton are my own twists on the traditional elements of this stew, which is laced with garlic and usually gets served with a hunk of sourdough bread. To round out the meal, you don't need much more than a crisp green salad, a little more crusty bread, a simple dessert (like fresh fruit with a custard sauce like zabaglione), and some red wine.





# How to make cioppino

## What you'll need

### Cioppino

*Serves six to eight.*

FOR THE GARLIC OIL AND GARLIC CHIPS:

**4 large cloves garlic**  
**½ cup extra-virgin olive oil**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

FOR THE SHELLFISH STOCK:

**1 pound large shrimp (16-20 count)**  
**6½ cups homemade or low-salt chicken broth**

FOR THE CIOPPINO BROTH:

**¼ cup olive oil**  
**3 cups coarsely chopped yellow onion (about 2 medium)**  
**1 cup coarsely chopped carrot (about 2 medium)**  
**⅔ cup coarsely chopped celery or fennel (about 2 medium ribs celery or ¼ medium fennel bulb)**  
**3 tablespoons coarsely chopped garlic (5 to 6 large cloves)**  
**6 cups canned whole peeled tomatoes, broken up, with their juices, or diced tomatoes with their juices (2 28-ounce cans)**  
**2½ cups (¾ bottle) medium-bodied red wine, such as Zinfandel, Pinot Noir, or Sangiovese**  
**6 cups Shellfish Stock (above)**  
**3 large bay leaves**  
**¼ cup coarsely chopped fresh basil (or 1 tablespoon dried)**  
**1 tablespoon coarsely chopped fresh oregano (or 1 teaspoon dried)**  
**2 teaspoons fennel seeds**  
**½ teaspoon crushed red chile flakes; more to taste**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

FOR FINISHING THE STEW:

**8 ¾-inch-thick slices sourdough bread**  
**Garlic Oil (above)**  
**Cioppino Broth (above)**  
**1 to 1½ pounds small hardshell clams, such as mahogany or cherrystones, scrubbed, or 1 whole Dungeness crab (about 2 pounds), cleaned and cut into sections (have the fishmonger do this)**  
**1 to 1½ pounds fresh mussels (18 to 24), scrubbed and debearded**  
**2½ pounds fillets of halibut, monkfish, or other firm-fleshed white fish, cut into 1-inch cubes**  
**Reserved peeled shrimp from above**  
**¼ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**  
**Garlic Chips (above), for garnish**

## Up to a day ahead:

### Make the garlic oil and garlic chips

Cut the garlic cloves into ⅛-inch slices, put them in a small saucepan with the oil, and season with salt and pepper. Cook over low to medium-low heat until the garlic turns light golden brown, 15 to 20 minutes, adjusting the heat as needed to keep the garlic bubbling gently as it cooks. Remove from the heat and let cool to room temperature. Strain, reserving both the oil and the garlic chips separately. Reserve the garlic chips for garnish (don't leave them at room temperature for more than a day or they'll get soggy). Refrigerate the oil in a clean, sealed container. (You'll use the oil for the sourdough croutons; use any leftover oil for vinaigrettes, roasted vegetables, pasta, or roast chicken.)

### Make an easy shellfish stock

Peel the shrimp, reserving the shells. (Refrigerate the shelled shrimp to use later in the stew.) Simmer the shells in the chicken broth for 5 minutes, covered. Strain and refrigerate until ready to use.



### Make the broth

Heat the olive oil in an 8-quart or larger pot over medium heat. Add the onions, carrot, celery of fennel, and chopped garlic. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are lightly browned, 15 to 20 minutes. Add the tomatoes with their juices, the wine, shellfish stock, bay leaves, basil, oregano, fennel seeds, chile flakes, 1 teaspoon salt, and several grinds of pepper. Bring to a boil and then reduce the heat to maintain a simmer and cook for about 20 minutes. Strain through a medium sieve, pressing on the solids in the sieve. Discard the contents of the sieve. Rinse the pot and return the broth to the pot. Boil the broth until reduced to 8 cups. (If you over-reduce the broth, just add water to compensate.) Taste and add more salt and pepper if needed, remembering that the fish will add some saltiness to the stew. Refrigerate until ready to use.

## drink choices

Because you'll be using red wine to make the stew base, this is a great chance to actually serve red wine with fish. John Ash likes to serve the same wine—or at least a wine from the same grape—that he used to make the recipe. Just be sure the wine is young, fruity, and not overly tannic. (Fortunately, this usually translates to "not too expensive.") If you go with Pinot Noir, try Gallo of Sonoma (\$13) or Fetzer Five Rivers Ranch (\$13), both from California.

If you opt for Zinfandel, the 2002 Bonny Doon Cardinal Zin "Beastly Old Vines" from California (\$16) would be my choice. Or, for a nod to cioppino's Italian roots, try Barbera, a delicious Italian wine with zippy acidity and juicy fruit. I like the 2001 Michele Chiarlo Barbera d'Asti (\$16) or the 2002 Pasquero Paitin Barbera d'Alba "Serra Boella" (\$18).

*Tim Gaiser, a master sommelier, is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking.*

Half an hour before serving:



### Make the toast and cook the shellfish

Position a rack directly under the broiler and heat the broiler. Brush the bread on both sides with the reserved garlic oil. Put the bread on a baking sheet (or directly on the rack) and toast on both sides. While you toast the bread, return the broth to a simmer over medium-high to high heat.

When each batch of seafood is added, it will cause the temperature of the broth to plunge, so you might need to raise and lower the heat to maintain a simmer. If using clams, start by adding them to the broth and simmer until they open, 3 to 5 minutes. Add the mussels and crab, if using, and simmer until the mussels have opened, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the fish and shrimp. Stir carefully with a slotted spoon to get all the fish and shrimp into the broth, but try not to break the pieces up. Cover and cook until the fish is just barely cooked through, another 3 to 5 minutes, keeping in mind that the fish will continue to cook a little in the time it takes to dish out the servings.

### Assemble the stew

Set a piece of toasted sourdough in the bottom of each warm bowl and evenly portion the seafood into the bowls (be sure to discard any unopened clams or mussels). Ladle the broth on top.

### Garnish and serve

Sprinkle the chopped parsley and garlic chips over all and serve immediately.

## Dungeness crab is traditional but not essential

The cold waters off the San Francisco Bay all the way north to Alaska are rich fishing grounds for Dungeness crab, which is why this sweet beauty is often included in cioppino. But if you can't find Dungeness—or any crab, for that matter—don't worry: Your stew will still taste great without it.

A typical shopping list for cioppino is about 2 to 3 pounds fresh boned firm fish fillets (halibut, sea bass, or monkfish), about 3 pounds clams, mussels, or crab (or a mix) and 1 pound shrimp. If you can find Dungeness crab, by all means buy it

(it should weigh about 2 pounds) and have the fishmonger cut it up into parts for you. For the recipe above, add the crab pieces at the same time as the mussels. If you have



access to other fresh crab in the shell, use 2 pounds. Don't use canned or frozen crab. The flavor is inferior, and you'll be missing the shells, which also add important flavor to the finished cioppino.

—the editors



John Ash's latest book is *Cooking One on One*. He lives in Santa Rosa, California. ♦



# Vanilla flavor pure

For the best-tasting  
vanilla desserts, reach for  
beans or pure extract

BY ABIGAIL JOHNSON DODGE



**W**hen it comes to vanilla, there's nothing like the real thing—especially when vanilla flavor is the star of the dessert. In my experience, pure vanilla, either beans with their dazzling seeds or pure extract, give the best flavor to desserts, whether they're cakes, custards, sauces, ice cream, cookies, or fruit compotes.

Vanilla beans and their tiny seeds lend an especially intense flavor and heavenly aroma to any dessert, but they're quite costly and aren't as readily available as pure vanilla extract. I use vanilla beans in my desserts when I'm celebrating a special occasion or when a particular dessert benefits from the potent flavor and the tantalizingly beautiful seeds. But it's

pure vanilla extract that I use on a regular basis—it's the workhorse ingredient in all of my desserts. While its flavor isn't quite as strong as the bean's and it lacks the visual element of the seeds, I find the results just as aromatic and delicious. The following recipes capitalize on the pure, bold flavor of vanilla, and you can make all of these desserts with either pure extract or vanilla beans.

Although it might be tempting to use less expensive imitation vanilla flavoring, especially if your dessert features other strong flavorings like spices or chocolate, don't do it. Imitation or artificial vanilla flavoring isn't really vanilla at all, but a lowly, cloying impersonator that will always leave a bitter taste in your desserts.



## Soft & Chewy Vanilla Cookies

*Yields about 2½ dozen cookies.*

These thin, delicate rounds have a heady vanilla perfume—perfect with hot or iced tea or as a snack at any time of the day. The cookies can be eaten as is (my favorite way) or sandwiched with a bit of the icing from the pound cake (see p. 69) or a touch of your favorite fruit preserves.

**6¾ ounces (1½ cups)  
unbleached all-purpose flour**  
**½ teaspoon table salt**  
**¼ teaspoon baking powder**  
**6 ounces (¾ cup) unsalted  
butter, softened at room  
temperature**  
**1¼ cups granulated sugar**  
**Seeds scraped from 1 vanilla  
bean, or 1½ teaspoons pure  
vanilla extract**  
**2 large eggs**

Position the oven racks in the top and bottom thirds of the oven and heat the oven to 375°F. Line two cookie sheets with parchment.

In a medium bowl, whisk the flour, salt, and baking powder until well blended. In another

medium bowl, beat the butter on medium-high speed with an electric mixer (a hand-held works well) until smooth. Add the sugar and vanilla bean seeds or extract and continue beating until well combined, about 2 minutes. Add the eggs and beat until well blended, about 1 minute longer. Add the flour mixture and mix on low speed until just blended, about 30 seconds.

Using a 1-tablespoon cookie scoop or two tablespoons, arrange heaping tablespoonfuls of the dough in mounds about 3 inches apart on the prepared cookie sheets. Bake two sheets at a time, swapping the sheets' positions half way through baking, until the edges are golden brown, 10 to 14 minutes.

Set the sheets on racks and let cool for 5 minutes before transferring the cookies to the racks to cool completely. Using cooled cookie sheets, bake the remaining cookie dough. Store in an airtight container at room temperature for up to three days or freeze for up to a month.



## IS VANILLA BEAN PASTE BETTER?

You might see vanilla bean paste in stores—it's a thick liquid that suspends the tiny vanilla seeds. We tested all the recipes here side by side using beans, extract, and paste, and we found that the paste worked best in batters. We don't recommend paste for custards (ours had a strange texture) or icings (ours separated).

—the editors

## Best buys: shopping for and storing vanilla

### Extract

**BUYING:** Always buy pure vanilla extract, never imitation. For information on some good brands, turn to p. 82.

**STORING:** Sealed and stored in a cool, dark spot, vanilla extract will last almost forever—the flavor may even improve with age. That's good news if you like to buy in large quantities. Many good brands are available in larger volumes at discounted rates.

### Beans

**BUYING:** Selecting vanilla beans is much like choosing fruit—look for size, shape, feel, and smell. The per-

fect bean is 5 to 7 inches long, plump, and has very dark brown skin; it should feel moist and supple (not dry and brittle) when rolled between your fingers. And be sure it passes the sniff test: Even through heavy plastic, the aroma should be close to intoxicating.

**STORING:** Store vanilla beans in a sealed container in a cool, dark place. They should stay moist for up to six months. If they begin to dry out, add them to your vanilla extract or a jar of vodka. And don't discard the used beans: The seeded pods still have tons of flavor. Add them to your sugar container, coffee beans, or favorite liqueur.







### Individual Vanilla Puddings

*Yields 2 cups pudding; serves four (recipe can be doubled).*

**1/3 cup granulated sugar**  
**5 teaspoons cornstarch**  
**1/4 teaspoon table salt**  
**1 3/4 cups whole milk**  
**1/2 vanilla bean, split, or**  
**3/4 teaspoon pure vanilla extract**  
**4 large egg yolks**  
**2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 4 pieces, at room temperature**

In a medium saucepan, whisk the sugar, cornstarch, and salt until well blended. Slowly pour in the milk, whisking constantly. Add the vanilla bean, if using. Set the pan over medium heat and bring to a simmer, whisking frequently, 3 to 10 minutes, depending on your stove and saucepan. Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, whisk the egg yolks until well blended.

When the milk mixture is thickened and simmering, slowly pour it into the egg yolks, whisking constantly. Pour the mixture back into the saucepan. Cook over medium heat, whisking constantly, until the mixture comes back to a boil, about 1 minute. Remove the pan from the heat. With a fork, fish out the vanilla bean, if using, and use your fingers to scrape any remaining seeds into the pudding. Add the butter and, if using, the vanilla extract. Whisk until well blended. Divide the hot pudding evenly between four custard cups (or pour into a clean medium bowl). Gently press a piece of plastic wrap directly on the pudding's surface to prevent a skin from forming. Refrigerate until chilled, about 2 hours or for up to three days.

### How to: Scrape seeds from the pod

Hold the bean at one end and, using a paring knife, split the bean lengthwise in half (if only half a bean is called for, cut the whole bean in half crosswise before splitting just one of the halves). Then slide the back of the knife down the opened or cut end of the bean and scrape out the seeds.

### How to: Substitute extract for beans

There's no exact rule for determining equivalent amounts of vanilla beans to extract. After all, beans can vary in size while extracts can vary in potency. Vanilla will also behave differently in different types of desserts. If you need an estimate, though, a good place to start is substituting 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract for half a vanilla bean.



## Vanilla & Sour Cream Pound Cake with Vanilla Glaze

Serves twelve.

### FOR THE CAKE:

**½ pound (1 cup) unsalted butter, softened at room temperature; more for the pan**  
**13½ ounces (3 cups) unbleached all-purpose flour; more for the pan**  
**2½ teaspoons baking powder**  
**¼ teaspoon baking soda**  
**½ teaspoon table salt**  
**1½ cups granulated sugar**  
**Seeds scraped from ¾ vanilla bean, or 2½ teaspoons pure vanilla extract**  
**6 large eggs**  
**1 cup sour cream**

### FOR THE GLAZE:

**4 ounces (1 cup) confectioners' sugar, sifted if lumpy**  
**3 tablespoons heavy cream**  
**1 tablespoon light corn syrup**  
**Seeds scraped from ¼ vanilla bean, or ½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract**

**Make the cake:** Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 325°F. Grease and lightly flour the bottom and sides of a 10-cup fluted tube pan.

In a medium bowl, combine the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt; whisk until well blended. Beat the butter on medium-high speed with a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment (or use a large bowl and a hand-held electric mixer) until smooth, 1 minute. Add the

sugar and vanilla bean seeds or extract and continue beating until well combined and fluffy, 2 minutes. Stop to scrape the bowl as needed. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well for 30 seconds and then stopping to scrape the bowl after each addition. Add half of the flour mixture and mix on low speed until just blended. Add the sour cream and mix until just blended. Add the remaining flour mixture and beat on low speed until just blended.

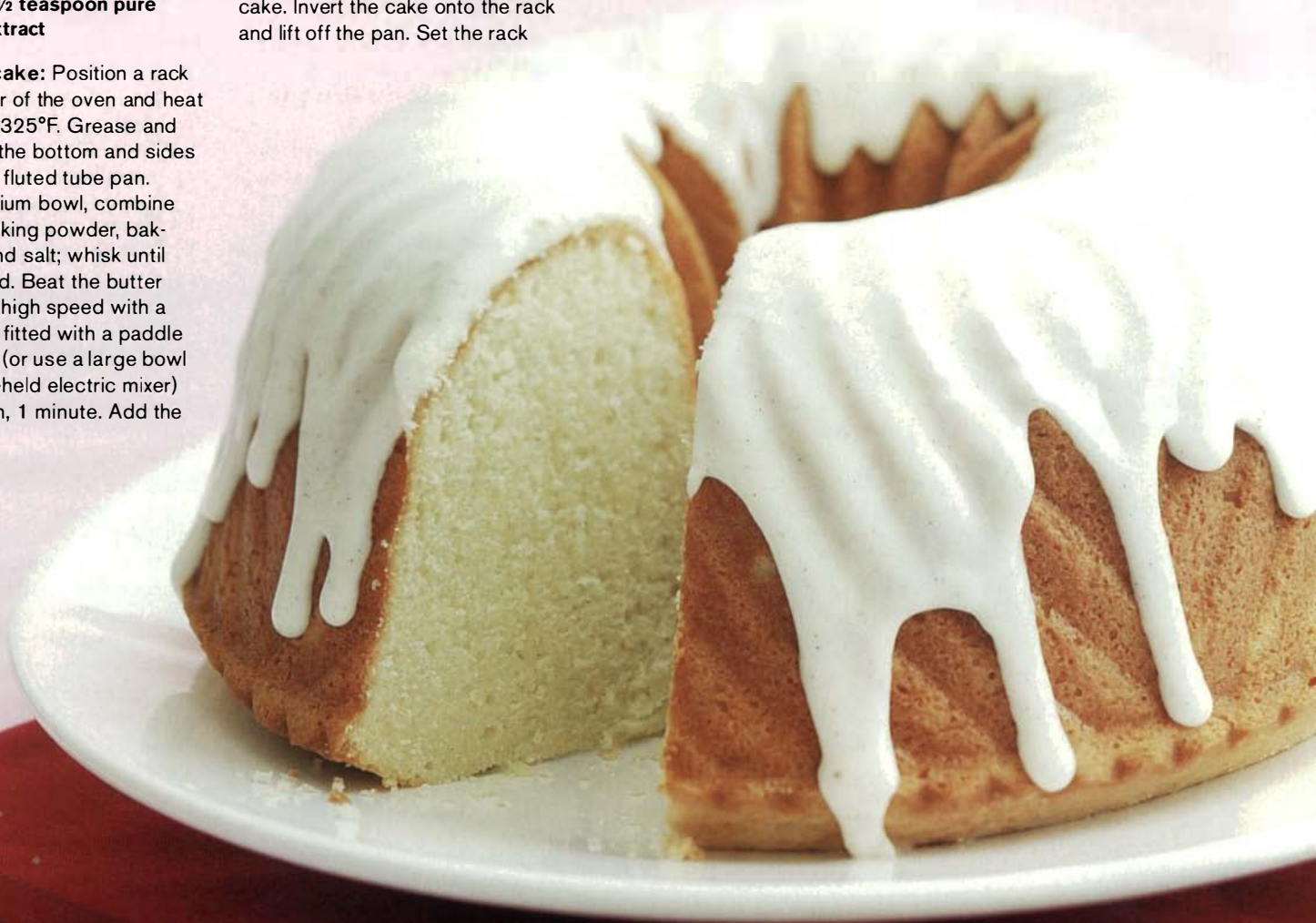
Scrape the batter into the prepared pan and spread evenly with a rubber spatula. Bake until the top of the cake is light brown and a cake tester or toothpick inserted in the center comes out with just a few small crumbs attached, 50 to 55 minutes.

Transfer the cake pan to a rack and let cool for about 15 minutes. If necessary, run a knife between the cake and the pan to loosen the cake. Invert the cake onto the rack and lift off the pan. Set the rack

over a large sheet of waxed paper or foil (to catch the glaze later) and let the cake cool completely.

**Glaze the cake:** In a small bowl, combine the confectioners' sugar, heavy cream, corn syrup, and vanilla bean seeds or extract. Stir until well blended, smooth, and shiny. The glaze should be thick but fluid enough to fall from a spoon. If it isn't, add more cream, 1 teaspoon at a time, until the glaze thins to the right consistency. Spoon the glaze evenly over the top of the cake. The glaze should form thick ribbons that drip down the sides of the cake. If the glaze resists dripping on its own, use the back of the spoon to encourage it. Let the glaze set for at least 1 hour before serving. Store loosely covered at room temperature for up to three days. (The cake can also be frozen unglazed.)

**Tip:** It's important not to forget the salt in vanilla recipes. Without it, the vanilla flavor will be flat and boring.







### Vanilla Ice Cream

*Yields about 3 cups; serves six.*

- 1 cup whole milk**
- 1 cup heavy cream**
- 1 vanilla bean, split, or 1 ½ teaspoons pure vanilla extract**
- 6 large egg yolks**
- ⅓ cup granulated sugar**
- ⅛ teaspoon table salt**

Fill a large bowl with a few inches of ice water and have ready a medium metal bowl that will fit in the larger bowl. In a medium saucepan, bring the milk, cream, and vanilla bean (if using) to a simmer over medium heat. Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, whisk the yolks, sugar, and salt until thick and pale, about 2 minutes. Take the pan off the heat. Whisking constantly, slowly pour the hot liquid into the yolk mixture; whisk until well blended. Return the mixture to the saucepan and set the pan over medium-low heat. Cook, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, until the custard thickens slightly, enough that if you draw a line with a fingertip through the sauce on the back of the spoon, it should hold the shape of the line; an instant-read thermometer will register 175°F. This can take 2 to 10 minutes, depending on your pan and your stove. Don't let the custard simmer or boil. Immediately strain the custard through a medium sieve into the medium metal bowl and set the bowl in the ice-water bath. Stir occasionally until very cold (at least below 50°F), about 45 minutes.

Fish out the vanilla bean, if using, and use your fingers to scrape any remaining seeds into the custard; stir to distribute the seeds. Or, if using vanilla extract, stir it in now. Freeze the custard in an ice-cream maker following the manufacturer's instructions. Meanwhile, put a medium bowl in the freezer to chill. When the ice cream is ready, scrape it into the frozen bowl. Serve immediately (it will be soft) or freeze for up to two days. Let the ice cream soften slightly before serving from the freezer.



Lighten the cake batter with whipped egg whites.



### Classic Vanilla Layer Cake with Vanilla Mascarpone Frosting & Raspberries

*Yields one 9-inch cake; serves twelve.*

#### FOR THE CAKE LAYERS:

- ½ pound (1 cup) unsalted butter, softened at room temperature; more for the pan**
- All-purpose flour for the pan**
- 12 ounces (3 cups) cake flour**
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon baking powder**
- ¾ teaspoon table salt**
- 1 ¾ cups granulated sugar**
- Seeds scraped from ¾ vanilla bean, or 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract**
- 1 cup whole milk**
- 6 large egg whites, at room temperature**

#### FOR THE FROSTING:

- 1 pound mascarpone cheese, at room temperature**
- 2 cups heavy cream**
- ¾ cup granulated sugar**
- Seeds scraped from 1 vanilla bean, or 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract**
- Pinch table salt**

- 2 pints raspberries, rinsed and patted dry**

**Make the cake:** Position a rack in the center of the oven and

heat the oven to 350°F. Grease the bottom and sides of two 9-inch round cake pans. Line the bottoms with parchment and lightly flour the sides of the pans, tapping out any excess.

Sift the cake flour, baking powder, and salt onto a paper plate or into a medium bowl. In a large bowl, beat the butter with a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment (or a hand-held electric mixer) on medium speed until smooth, 1 minute. Add 1 ½ cups of the sugar and the vanilla bean seeds or extract. Continue beating until well combined and fluffy, 2 minutes. Stop to scrape the bowl as needed. On low speed, add the one-third of the dry ingredients at a time, alternating with ½ cup of the milk at a time, beginning and ending with the flour. After the last addition, scrape the bowl and mix for about 30 seconds to mix the batter fully.

In a medium bowl, beat the egg whites with an electric mixer (a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment or a hand-held) on medium-high speed until soft peaks form. Increase the speed to high and gradually add the remaining ¼ cup sugar. Continue beating until the whites form medium-firm peaks. Using a



Arrange half of the berries on the frosting; use any less-than-perfect berries for this layer.



Apply a crumb coat—a very thin layer of frosting—over the entire cake.

rubber spatula, scoop up about one-quarter of the whites and stir them gently into the cake batter to lighten it. Gently fold in the remaining whites until just blended.

Scrape the batter evenly into the prepared pans. Bake until the tops are light brown and a toothpick or cake tester inserted in the center of the cake comes out clean, about 30 minutes. Set the pans on a rack and let cool for about 15 minutes. Run a knife between the cake and the pan to loosen each cake. Invert the layers onto a rack, lift off the pans and peel away the parchment. Let cool completely.

**Make the frosting:** In a medium bowl, combine the mascarpone, cream, sugar, vanilla seeds or extract, and salt. Using an electric mixer, beat on low speed until almost smooth, 30 to 60 seconds. Increase the speed to medium high and beat until the mixture is thick and holds firm peaks, another 30 to 60 seconds. Don't overbeat or the frosting will look grainy.

**Assemble the cake:** Using your hands, gently brush away any excess crumbs from the layers. Set one cake layer, top side down, on a flat serving plate. To

protect the plate from smears, slide small strips of foil or parchment under the bottom of the cake to cover the plate. Using a metal spatula or the back edge of a table knife, spread about 2 cups of the frosting evenly over the layer. Arrange about half the berries in a single layer on the frosting but leave a half-inch ring of space around the edge of the cake uncovered. Place the second cake layer, top side down, on top of the frosting. Be sure the sides are aligned and then press gently on the layer. Apply a very thin layer of frosting over the entire cake to seal in any stray crumbs. Chill in the refrigerator for 5 minutes. Spread the remaining frosting over the top and sides of the cake, leaving lots of swirls and peaks on the top. Garnish the top with remaining berries. Carefully remove the foil or parchment strips from under the cake. Refrigerate the cake for 4 hours or up to two days. To keep the fruit looking fresh, cover the cake loosely with plastic after it has chilled for 1 hour.

*Abigail Johnson Dodge, a contributing editor to Fine Cooking, is the author of The Weekend Baker.* ♦





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BY JENNIFER ARMENTROUT



Look closely the next time you're in the canned tomato section at the supermarket, and you should see a new product tucked in among all the other cans. "Petite" diced tomatoes (right) are a great choice when regular canned diced tomatoes are too large. They were the perfect solution for two recipes

in this issue—**Mexican Tomato Rice & Beans** (p. 49) and **Sear-Roasted Chicken with Tomato & Red Wine Sauce** (p. 39)—where regular diced tomatoes seemed too big and horsey. Most of the major tomato processors, like **Del Monte** and **Contadina**, offer petite diced tomatoes.

## shopping for and storing: **Hardshell clams & mussels**



**SPOTTING THE GOOD ONES:** At the fish counter, use your eyes and your nose to guide you. Fresh hardshell clams and mussels should look tightly closed or just slightly gaping open. If they're yawning wide, they're dead or close to it. Once you have them in hand, take a sniff. They should smell like the sea. If they're really fishy smelling, don't buy them.

**KEEPING THEM FRESH:** Shellfish will suffocate in plastic, so take them out of the bag as soon as you get home, put them in a bowl, cover with a wet towel, and refrigerate. It's best to cook them as soon as possible, but if they were fresh to begin with, they should keep stored this way for up to two days.

**CLEANING THEM UP:** Just before cooking, look for any shellfish that have opened and tap them on the counter. If they don't close, discard them. Check closed mussels by pressing on the two shells in opposing directions. Dead ones will fall apart. Once you've weeded out the bad ones, scrub the remaining shellfish under cold running water with a stiff brush to get rid of any grit. If the mussels have "beards"—black hairy fibers sticking out of their shells—pinch them and yank them off.



## Broccoli raab: a better bitter

Broccoli raab, rapini, broccoli rabe, broccoli rape, brocoletti di rape, brocoletto—all those are names for a vegetable that looks like turnip greens topped with small broccoli florets. Native to the Mediterranean and related to both turnips and broccoli, this may be the plant from which the more familiar broccoli was cultivated. For some people, broccoli raab's bitter, peppery flavor takes getting used to, but for those who like bitter flavors, it can be addictive.

If you want to try broccoli raab, check out the recipe for Campanelle with Broccoli Raab, Sausage & Olives on p. 86c. Look for bunches of broccoli raab that show no signs of wilting or yellowing. Rinse well and trim off the lower, thicker stalks. Broccoli raab cooks quickly—it gets tender in about three minutes. Steaming, sautéing, braising, and stir-frying are all good ways to cook broccoli raab, but to cut some of the bitterness, blanch it first in boiling water for a minute or two. If you'd like to improvise with broccoli raab, combine it with other assertive ingredients like sausages, hot peppers, olives, garlic, and lemon, or mellow it with sweet, soothing foods like cream, caramelized onions, or beans.

## Cipolline sweet onions in a little package

Cute little cipolline (chip-oh-LEE-nee) onions are a fun way to add oniony flavor. Originally from Italy, these petite flying-saucer shaped onions have a sweet, delicate flavor that's terrific in stews and braises. Try them in the recipe for Braised Asparagus & Cipolline Onions on p. 45, or throw a few into the mix the next time you make a pot roast. They're also good baked until tender and sprinkled with a little Parmesan, or blanched and threaded onto skewers and grilled.



## For a coarser texture, make dry breadcrumbs at home

The fine consistency of store-bought dried breadcrumbs works well for the meatballs on p. 51, but for the leg of lamb with mint, pine nut, and currant stuffing on p. 56, you'll get a better texture in the stuffing if you use coarse breadcrumbs that you dry and toast yourself. Start by making coarse fresh breadcrumbs: Tear a loaf of day-old French or Italian bread into chunks and pulse in a food processor until you have coarse crumbs. To dry the crumbs, heat the oven to 300°F. For every 1 cup of dry breadcrumbs needed, spread 1½ cups fresh crumbs on a rimmed baking sheet. Bake, stirring occasionally, until the crumbs feel dry and start to turn golden, 10 to 15 minutes. Let cool before using. Store unused fresh and dry crumbs separately in the freezer so you have a supply whenever you need them.





## knife skills

# Butterflying a boneless leg of lamb

To make the boneless leg of lamb with mint, pine nut, and currant stuffing on p. 56, you may need to make a few adjustments to your boneless leg of lamb in order to get the shape that's ideal for stuffing and rolling—evenly thick and more or less rectangular. Here's how:



**1** *Unroll the meat and trim any visible sinew, but don't trim anything that's holding together sections of the leg. Visually size up the meat with the aim in mind of shaping it into a rectangle.*



**2** *Holding the knife parallel to the cutting board, make cuts midway through thicker sections of the meat. Don't cut quite all the way through but do make the cut in a direction that will let you open the section like a book and fill in gaps in the rectangle.*



**3** *Be sure to roll up the stuffed leg in the direction that, after roasting, will allow you to cut the finished roast into pretty spiral slices, across—not with—the grain of the meat.*

# Carving a bone-in leg of lamb

A whole leg of lamb like the one coated in a dried cherry, mustard, and herb crust on p. 54 is an impressive-looking roast. To make it equally impressive to eat, resist the urge to carve the meat in the same direction as the bone or you'll end up slicing it with the grain and the meat won't be as tender as it could be. Instead, use this method:



**1** *On one of the meaty sides of the leg, cut a few slices in the direction of the bone. These cuts are with the meat grain, but they'll give you a flat area on which to stabilize the leg.*



**2** *Turn the leg over so it rests on the flat area. Make a series of cuts, in whatever thickness you like, perpendicular to and all the way down to the bone.*



**3** *Turn your knife so it's parallel to the bone and cut the slices free in one sweeping motion. Repeat with the other sides of the leg.*

25  
Celebrating  
Years

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## ingredient

# Barley

In its heyday during ancient times, barley was the most important cereal grain in the world. First cultivated in the Near East at least 8,000 years ago, barley was used as currency, as a unit of measure, as medicine, and as a sacred offering as well as for food. In modern times, though, barley has lost much of its glamour. It's used mainly for making malt for beer, malt vinegar, and other products. But given its versatility, maybe it's time for a barley renaissance.

## Forms of barley

Like most grains, barley is processed into a number of different forms. **Hulled barley (barley groats)** has had its inedible husk removed but still has its nutritious, fiber-rich bran layer. **Pearl barley** has been refined to strip it of its bran and germ. It's still nutritious, though not so much as hulled barley; it's to hulled barley as white rice is to brown rice.

**Pot or scotch barley** is a less refined type of pearl barley. **Rolled or flaked barley** is hulled barley that's been flattened, like rolled oats. **Quick-cooking barley** is flattened and parcooked, so it cooks faster; nutritionally, it's similar to pearl barley.

## Where to find barley

Look in health-food stores for whole hulled barley, pot barley, and rolled barley. In supermarkets, you'll find pearl barley near the dried beans, and quick-cooking barley in the hot cereal section.

## Cooking with barley

Barley has a mild flavor that's not as nutty as many other grains, but it has an unusually chewy texture—it pops softly as you bite it. It can be used in just about every way that rice is used—in pilafs, soups, and even risottos (see Lemon Barley “Risotto” with Shrimp on p. 86c). Rolled barley is often eaten as a hot cereal.

It's usually a good idea to rinse barley before cooking. Whole hulled barley takes about an hour to cook (though a pressure cooker can speed things along). Pearl barley and rolled barley need about 20 minutes to get tender. Quick-cooking barley is usually done in 12 to 15 minutes.



## Barley Minestrone

*Yields about 3 quarts.*

This rendition of the classic Italian vegetable and bean soup uses barley instead of pasta. Simmering a piece of the rind from Parmigiano Reggiano in the soup is a traditional way of adding flavor. When you finish off a wedge of Parmigiano, just stash the rind in the freezer so you always have it on hand when you need it.

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup finely diced pancetta (about 1 ounce)
- 2 cups large diced Savoy cabbage
- 1 cup medium diced yellow onion
- 1 cup sliced carrot (¼ inch thick)
- ¼ cup medium diced celery
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 quarts homemade or low-salt chicken broth
- 1 14½-ounce can diced tomatoes, with their juices
- ½ cup pearl barley, rinsed
- 2 large sprigs fresh rosemary
- 2-inch square Parmigiano Reggiano rind (optional)

- Kosher salt
- 1 cup rinsed and drained canned kidney beans
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano for serving

Heat the oil in a heavy 6-quart or larger pot over medium heat. Add the pancetta and cook, stirring frequently, until it becomes ever so slightly golden, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the cabbage, onion, carrot, celery, and garlic. Cook, stirring frequently, until the vegetables begin to soften, about 6 minutes. Add the broth, the tomatoes with their juices, the barley, rosemary, Parmigiano rind (if using), ½ teaspoon salt, and 1 cup water. Bring to a boil over high heat, and then reduce the heat to a simmer and cook until the barley and vegetables are tender, about 20 minutes. Discard the rosemary sprigs and Parmigiano rind. Stir in the beans and season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve sprinkled with the grated Parmigiano.

tasting panel

# Diced canned tomatoes

**W**hen fresh tomatoes are out of season, diced canned tomatoes are an excellent and convenient substitute in sauces, soups, side dishes, and even salsas. To find out which brand is best to use, we held a blind tasting of five major national brands and one big regional player. Each brand was poured from the can into a glass bowl for visual reference, and tasting samples of each brand were served plain at room temperature. Our tasters were amazed to find that diced tomatoes differ markedly—in appearance, consistency, and flavor—from one brand to the next. Progresso was the clear favorite, but we also found Contadina and Muir Glen very likeable.

—Kimberly Y. Masibay, associate editor



Top  
Pick

**PROGRESSO**  
\$1.79 (28 ounces)

The definitive favorite, these tomatoes were praised for their well-rounded ripe-tomato flavor. The dice, while somewhat irregular in size, had a toothsome texture and tasted clean, bright, and sweet, just like a tomato should. We think they'd be great in everything from uncooked salsas to soups and skillet sauces for pasta.

**Runners-up** Diced tomatoes numbered in order of preference; prices may vary.



**2 CONTADINA**  
\$1.69 (28 ounces)

The solid second-place finisher had a robust fresh-tomato aroma, while good levels of acidity and salt rounded out the sweet, fruity flavor. With their nice balance and soft texture, these tomatoes seem well-suited for cooked tomato sauces and stews.



**3 MUIR GLEN**  
\$2.59 (28 ounces)

A close runner-up, this organic product had a fall-apart texture and a pleasant balance of sweetness, salt, and acidity—unfortunately, the tomatoes didn't taste especially tomatoey. A bit of reducing might intensify the muted flavor, so this is a safe bet for long-cooked sauces and braises.



**4 DEL MONTE**  
\$1.59 (28 ounces)

The freshest-looking of the bunch, these handsome diced tomatoes had a sunny tomato aroma to match. The balance of flavors, however, tilted heavily toward the acidic, as if the tomatoes were underripe. In dishes where sourness is welcome—tangy, brothy Asian soups come to mind—these might be just the thing.



**5 HUNT'S**  
\$1.65 (28 ounces)

The saltiest and sweetest of the bunch, these large diced tomatoes swam in thick, almost saucy juice. Several tasters noted that the aroma and flavor reminded them of canned mandarin oranges and fruit cocktail. Sadly, though, we weren't reminded of tomatoes.



**6 REDPACK**  
\$1.45 (28 ounces)

Distributed in the Northeast, these diced tomatoes were quite salty, with little tomato flavor and a somewhat bitter finish. They lacked the sweetness and acidity we expect from tomatoes.



# shoppingguide

## Appliances

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# Great results from every recipe

Learn to work with moist and dry heat

BY KIMBERLY Y. MASIBAY

**A**s you cook your way through this issue, you might braise asparagus, sear salmon steaks, roast a leg of lamb, or simmer a classic fish stew. Braising, searing, roasting, simmering—it's all cooking, obviously, but each technique yields a uniquely delicious result. The question is, why?

Cooking, by simple definition, is the application of heat to food. But all heat is not created equal. In the kitchen, there's a big difference between moist heat and dry heat. Whenever you add a water-based liquid to the pot or pan—for instance, when you simmer, boil, steam, or braise—you're cooking with moist heat. If you don't add water—when you sear, sauté, fry, roast, or grill—you're cooking with dry heat. And when you understand the different effects moist and dry heat have on food's flavor and texture, you'll be that much closer to getting the results you want from whichever cooking technique you choose.

## dry heat creates new colors and flavors

If you want the exterior of your food to be browned or crisp, dry heat is the only way to go. Dry, relatively high heat spurs molecular changes in the amino acids and sugars on the surface of food, turning them brown, sweet, and crisp. Allowed to progress unchecked, these browning reactions can take the exterior of your food from deliciously golden brown to bitter and burned. So the challenge of all dry-heat cooking methods is getting food cooked through before the exterior overcooks. The key is to choose the right dry-heat technique for your ingredients (see the table at right), or to combine two methods, such as searing first and then roasting.

**Searing, sautéing, and pan-frying.** When food hits a very hot, oiled pan, surface moisture

on the food quickly evaporates, and a nice brown crust begins to form on the surface of the food. A common pitfall with these dry-heat methods is overcrowding the pan, which hinders evaporation, causing food to steam in its own juices instead of brown.

The ideal foods for these stovetop techniques are fairly thin, tender cuts of meat (chicken breasts, steaks and chops, or fish) or uniformly chopped or sliced vegetables. If the food is too thick, you risk burning the outside before the inside is done—the surface of the food receives intense heat (up to 450°F) by being in direct contact with the hot pan, but heat travels comparatively slowly to the center of the food. Tony Rosenfeld tackles that problem in his story on p. 36 (“Sear,

Roast & Sauce”), where he sears thicker steaks, chops, chicken breasts, and salmon fillets on the stove and finishes cooking in the gentler heat of the oven.

**Roasting and baking.** When we bake or roast, we surround food with hot, dry air (300° to 500°F), which heats the surface, evaporates moisture, and allows browning to occur. It takes much longer to roast or bake food than to sear or sauté it because air is a poor heat conductor (you've probably noticed that you can put your hand in a 400°F oven but not in 400°F oil or in boiling water). This makes roasting ideal for cooking large cuts of meat or whole vegetables.

**Deep-frying.** This might seem a lot like boiling, but submerging food in hot oil is actually considered a dry-heat cooking

method. Hot oil gets far hotter than boiling water, so it's able to dry out the surface of food and brown it.

**Grilling and broiling.** When you grill over glowing embers or slide food beneath a fiery broiler, infrared heat cooks the food. The temperature of glowing coals and broiler elements can be off the charts—from 2,000° to 3,000°F—so you can quickly achieve amazing browning and flavor. But as with searing and deep-frying, if you're not careful, your kebabs or steaks will be charred outside and raw inside, so these techniques are best for thin, tender cuts of meat and quick-cooking vegetables.

# moist heat brings out foods' natural colors and flavors

The most obvious feature of moist-heat cooking methods is the absence of browning, which is triggered by dry, high heat. Consider the differences between boiled and roasted potatoes. When you eat food cooked in moist heat, you taste the inherent qualities of the food, as opposed to flavors created by the cooking method itself.

**Cooking in water: boiling, simmering, poaching.** Once water reaches its boiling point, it doesn't get any hotter (except in a pressure cooker). Although 212°F water is hot enough to tenderize food by breaking down

plant cells and complex protein molecules, it's not hot enough to kindle the chemical reactions that cause browning. One big advantage to cooking in water is speed; water conducts heat well and cooks food quickly. A few minutes in boiling water is all it takes to cook dense vegetables like carrots or cauliflower florets (in a 400°F oven, they take much longer).

With moist heat, burning isn't an issue, but it's still possible to overcook food, especially by boiling. Boil cauliflower too long and the cell walls will collapse, leaving you with pallid mush.

Most food is considered cooked when its interior temperature reaches somewhere between 125° and 170°F. In his book, *The Curious Cook*, Harold McGee demonstrates that if you can keep the cooking liquid's temperature at the food's ideal cooked temperature, there's no risk of overcooking. That's why it's kinder to simmer some foods in water at 180°F or even poach at 160°F. If you drop a chicken breast into boiling water, the exterior will be tough and dry by the time the meat is cooked through, but if you poach the breast, it can become succulent. Unfortunately,

it's easier to maintain a rolling boil than a 160°F poach, so stove-side vigilance and a thermometer are required.

**Cooking in water vapor:** Steam, which is 212°F or hotter, envelops food in moisture and cooks it quickly but gently. Steam can enhance the natural qualities of vegetables, and it cooks delicate fish without washing away their flavors or subjecting the flaky flesh to the agitating bubbles in simmering or boiling water. And if you want rice or couscous to be exceptionally fluffy instead of soggy, try cooking them with steam.

## How moist and dry heat affect food

Use this table to help you decide how to cook the ingredients you have at hand.

type of heat	effect	works well with
<b>dry</b>		
sear	flavorful brown crust on food's surface (does not seal in juices)	food with wide, flat surfaces: tender steaks and chops, fish fillets, scallops; griddle cakes
sauté, pan-fry	great flavor and texture on exterior of food; doesn't tenderize; can be drying	uniformly small pieces of tender meat and vegetables
grill or broil	intensely flavored browned or charred exterior	thin, tender cuts of meats and vegetables
deep-fry	crisp, browned exterior; moist, tender interior	uniformly small pieces of firm, starchy vegetables
roast	browned exterior; juicy interior	poultry; large tender cuts of meat; root vegetables and squash; fruits
<b>moist</b>		
poach	moist, tender	eggs; fish; shrimp; lobster pears; chicken breasts
simmer	moist, tender	dried grains and legumes; hearty greens
steam	plump, moist, tender	delicate protein; vegetables; dumplings; couscous
boil	rehydrates; tenderizes	dried pasta; firm vegetables

### Braising and stewing: the best of both worlds

Dry heat and moist heat have very different effects on food, and when you use both to cook a single dish—for instance, when you make a braise or a stew—something wonderful happens. You begin a braise or a stew by searing or pan-frying the meat and vegetables. Then you add liquid and simmer until the food is tender and cooked through. The end result is the best of both worlds: all the yummy browning flavors from dry-heat cooking and the melt-in-your-mouth succulence that only low, moist heat can coax out of food. These combination cooking methods can be used for anything from tough cuts of meat to all manner of vegetables (see Susie Middleton's article on quick vegetable braises on p. 41).

Kimberly Y. Masibay is an associate editor for *Fine Cooking*. ♦



## FROM THE BACK COVER

To learn more about Stone Barns Center for Food & Agriculture, call 914-366-6200 or visit [Stonebarnscenter.org](http://Stonebarnscenter.org).

## Equipment resources

Here's more information on where to find the products mentioned in the Equipment department, starting on p. 24.

### Kullenschliff knives

Many manufacturers are now putting dimpled edges on their knives. Stores refer to them as

kullenschliff or Granton

(or, incorrectly, hollow-ground) knives. To buy the

knives shown on p. 24,

try the following sources: The Wüsthof 7-inch santoku is \$87 from Professional Cutlery Direct (800-859-6994; [Cutlery.com](http://Cutlery.com)). The Granton 10-inch chef's knife is \$70 at The Knife Merchant (800-714-8226; [Knifemerchant.com](http://Knifemerchant.com)). The Lamson Sharp 6-inch utility knife is \$65 at Sur La Table (800-243-0852; [Surlatable.com](http://Surlatable.com)).



### Smoothtop electric ranges

Just about every range manufacturer offers electric ranges with smoothtop burners. The photo shown on p. 28 is a Bosch. For more information, visit [Boschappliances.com](http://Boschappliances.com). Some manufacturers that currently offer or are introducing triple-ring burners are Thermador, General Electric, and KitchenAid.

### Sear-Roasting, p. 36

On thin cuts of meat, digital instant-read thermometers work best. They're sold in most kitchenware stores, or try a Taylor brand digital instant read thermometer (\$8.50), available at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).

To order a fish spatula, visit Professional Cutlery Direct (800-859-6994; [Cutlery.com](http://Cutlery.com)); prices start at \$24.99.

### Oven Fries, p. 58

Molly Stevens recommends the French sea salt, fleur de sel, for seasoning oven fries. Visit Earthy Delights (800-367-4709; [Earthy.com](http://Earthy.com)) where a 2.75-ounce package of fleur de sel sells for \$7.50, and a 1-pound bag is \$19.50.

### Vanilla Desserts, p. 66

For information about vanilla bean and extract varieties, see the box at right. For a fluted tube pan, otherwise known as a bundt pan, try Sur La Table (800-243-0852; [Surlatable.com](http://Surlatable.com)), which carries 10-cup pans starting at \$28.95. Tablespoon-size cookie scoops for making the vanilla cookies sell for \$19.95 at The Baker's Catalogue (800-827-6836; [Kingarthurfour.com](http://Kingarthurfour.com)).



## Vanilla varieties

Just like wine or olive oil, the flavor of vanilla beans varies depending on where they're grown, so it's likely that in your supermarket you'll see vanilla beans and extract labeled Madagascar, Tahitian, or Mexican. If you're confused about which type to buy for the recipes in Abby Dodge's article on vanilla desserts (p. 66), consider their flavor profiles. Tahitian vanilla is known for its fragrant floral aroma, Mexican vanilla is nutty, and Madagascar vanilla is typically sweet and buttery. Choose one to suit your taste.

To order by mail, try Penzeys Madagascar vanilla beans (\$36.89 for 15) and pure vanilla extract (\$13.49 for 4 ounces), which have a mild, clean vanilla flavor; visit [Penzeys.com](http://Penzeys.com) (800-741-7787). We also like Watkins pure vanilla extract, \$19.99 for 5 ounces, available at [Watkinsonline.com](http://Watkinsonline.com). If you prefer a more floral vanilla, try Rain's Choice pure Tahitian vanilla extract, \$10.60 for 4 ounces, available at [Vanilla.com](http://Vanilla.com) (800-757-7511).





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Recipe	Page	Calories		Protein	Carb	Fats (g)				Chol.	Sodium	Fiber	Notes
		total	from fat	(g)	(g)	total	sat	mono	poly	(mg)	(mg)	(g)	
<b>Letters</b>	10												
Forty Shades of Green Salad		200	150	4	12	17	3	12	2	0	130	8	based on 4 servings
<b>In Season</b>	22												
Potato Cakes w/Chives & Sour Cream		310	210	5	21	23	6	15	2	15	550	2	per cake, w 1 tsp sour cream
<b>Sear, Roast &amp; Sauce</b>	36												
Sear-Roasted Beef Tenderloin w/Herb-Mustard Sauce		440	210	50	4	23	8	11	1	145	740	0	based on 4 servings
Sear-Roasted Chicken Breast w/Tomato & Red Wine Sauce		310	120	39	6	13	3	7	2	100	850	2	based on 4 servings
Sear-Roasted Salmon w/Lemon-Rosemary Butter Sauce		440	270	37	2	30	13	11	4	140	600	0	based on 4 servings
Sear-Roasted Pork Chops w/Balsamic-Fig Sauce		510	230	49	19	26	10	13	2	150	660	1	based on 4 servings
<b>Braised Vegetables</b>	41												
Braised Green Beans w/Ham & Mushrooms		250	170	6	10	19	6	10	1	30	340	3	based on 4 servings
Braised Carrots, Red Onions & Bell Peppers		150	90	2	14	10	3	6	1	10	210	3	based on 4 servings
Braised Asparagus & Cipolline Onions w/Pancetta		170	130	4	8	15	5	8	1	20	400	2	based on 4 servings
<b>Rice</b>	46												
White Basmati Rice Pilaf w/Whole Spices, Saffron & Mint		180	45	3	30	5	1	2	2	0	630	2	based on 6 servings
Brown Rice Salad w/Basil & Pistachios		330	140	8	41	15	2	10	3	0	330	6	based on 8 servings
Mexican Tomato Rice & Beans		200	35	6	34	4.0	0.5	3.0	0.5	0	620	5	based on 8 servings
<b>Spaghetti &amp; Meatballs</b>	50												
Marinara Sauce		120	70	2	11	8	1	6	1	0	1110	3	per ½ cup
Spaghetti & Meatballs		1060	460	47	99	51	14	29	5	170	4260	12	based on 6 servings
<b>Leg of Lamb</b>	52												
Grilled Butterflied Leg of Lamb w/Garlic & Curry Spices		260	110	25	8	13	3	7	1	80	440	1	based on 10 servings
Roasted Leg of Lamb w/Dried Cherry, Mustard & Herb Crust		450	140	40	28	16	4	9	1	115	610	3	based on 10 servings
Boneless Leg of Lamb w/Mint, Pine Nut & Currant Stuffing		600	280	36	40	31	11	13	5	175	680	3	based on 8 servings
Red Onion Jam		70	30	0	9	3.5	2.0	1.0	0	10	40	1	per tablespoon
<b>Oven Fries</b>	58												
Oven Fries		210	70	4	34	7	1	5	1	0	490	4	based on 4 servings
Lemon-Fennel Salt		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	80	0	per ¼ teaspoon
<b>Caramelized Onions</b>	60												
Caramelized Onions		120	45	2	19	5	1	4	1	0	320	3	per ¼ cup
Gemelli w/Asparagus & Caramelized Onions		720	290	29	83	32	9	18	4	35	1710	7	based on 4 servings
Braised Chicken w/Caramelized Onions & Mushrooms		460	170	40	32	19	5	11	2	105	760	4	based on 4 servings
<b>Cioppino</b>	63												
Cioppino		810	340	51	56	38	7	23	5	170	1600	4	based on 8 servings
<b>Vanilla Desserts</b>	66												
Soft & Chewy Vanilla Cookies		100	45	1	13	5	3	1	0	25	50	0	per cookie
Individual Vanilla Puddings		250	120	6	25	14	7	4	1	230	200	0	per ½ cup serving
Vanilla & Sour Cream Pound Cake w/Vanilla Glaze		490	210	7	62	24	14	7	1	160	290	1	per ½ cake
Vanilla Ice Cream		260	180	5	15	20	11	7	1	265	90	0	per ½ cup serving
Classic Vanilla Layer Cake w/Mascarpone Frosting & Raspberries		750	440	9	73	49	29	13	3	145	420	3	per ½ cake
<b>From Our Test Kitchen</b>	72												
Barley Minestrone		170	50	8	20	6	2	3	1	10	880	4	per cup
<b>Quick &amp; Delicious</b>	86c												
Roasted Apricot-Ginger Glazed Game Hens		560	300	35	30	33	9	14	8	205	740	0	based on 4 servings
Spring Vegetable & Potato Frittata		480	300	29	16	33	14	14	3	475	1010	2	based on 4 servings
Lemon Barley "Risotto" w/Shrimp, Bacon & Spinach		440	100	35	50	11	4	4	2	190	1340	7	based on 4 servings
Sautéed Tilapia over Swiss Chard w/Tarragon Butter		510	330	37	13	37	20	13	2	160	910	5	based on 2 servings
Campanelle w/Broccoli Raab, Sausage & Olives		550	300	21	42	33	8	20	4	30	1540	5	based on 4 servings
Pan-Seared Rib-Eye Steak w/Balsamic Onion & Tomato Salsa		520	350	33	8	39	16	17	2	120	560	1	based on 4 servings
Chicken Ragout w/Shiitake Mushrooms & New Potatoes		490	210	36	32	24	5	13	4	115	660	3	based on 4 servings

The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at The Food Consulting Company of Del Mar, California. When a recipe gives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used in the

calculations. Optional ingredients and those listed without a specific quantity are not included. When a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion is used. When the

quantity of salt and pepper aren't specified, the analysis is based on ¼ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper per serving for entrées, and ⅛ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper per serving for side dishes.

*a feast for*



*the holidays*



## an easy meal for any day

Australian Lamb makes a delicious holiday highlight. It's also easy and quick to prepare for everyday meals. Flavorful chops, shanks or legs are perfect for roasting, grilling or braising in minutes. And because Australian Lamb grazes on lush, green pastures, it's mild, lean and rich in nutrients—ideal for everyone at your table, any time of the year.

### Australian Lamb Leg Sandwiches with Mint-Pickled Cucumber

1 Australian leg of lamb, medium rare  
Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste  
4 pieces of a baguette or preferred bread  
Extra-virgin olive oil  
1 cucumber  
¼ cup rice wine or wine vinegar  
1 teaspoon sugar  
½ teaspoon of sea salt  
¼ cup chopped fresh mint  
1 dash Tabasco or Worcestershire sauce

1. Slice cucumber diagonally and very thin. (Try a vegetable peeler, cheese slicer or mandoline.) Place in a large, shallow bowl. Warm vinegar in a small saucepan. Add sugar

and salt, mixing until dissolved. Add mint and Tabasco and remove from heat. Pour over the cucumber and mix well. Allow to cool to room temperature, then cover and refrigerate for 1 hour or overnight.

2. Just before serving, drizzle the bread with oil. Slice the lamb thinly and arrange on one side of the baguette. Top with the cucumber, season with salt and pepper to taste. Enjoy!

To roast the lamb, season to taste and roast at 325-350° F about 20 minutes per pound, until internal temperature reaches 130-135° (medium rare). If serving warm, allow meat to rest for 10 minutes before slicing.

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READER SERVICE NO. 57



Fresh, Easy and Delicious.





**1.** Organic lettuces, carrots, endive, and other produce grow just steps away from the kitchen all year round—in a greenhouse with a heating system that kicks in if the temperature dips below 45°F. **2.** The eponymous stone barns house classrooms and Blue Hill at Stone Barns, a farm-to-table restaurant. **3.** Chefs Dan Barber (left) and Michael Anthony prepare a crab salad with roasted beets and micro greens in Blue Hill's kitchen. **4.** Cotswold sheep graze year round. Rotational farming methods are used, so livestock graze a given pasture in particular sequence, benefiting both the land and the animals. **5.** Dan Barber picks herbs from an organic garden right outside the kitchen door.

## From Farm to Table

**W**hen it comes to marrying fine food with ecologically sound farming, Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture in Pocantico Hills, New York, is an inspiring example of talking the talk and walking the walk. This nonprofit center is a working farm on a mission: to practice, teach, and promote local, community-based food production. What has made this unique venture possible is financing by David Rockefeller in memory of his wife, Peggy, a

hands-on cattle farmer, who was deeply committed to farmland and farm communities. "We're hoping to create more awareness about where food comes from, whether it's through visiting the farm, attending a class, or eating dinner at the restaurant," says Dan Barber, Stone Barns Center's creative director. "Connecting to the world around us through good food—what could be tastier than that?"

—Amy Albert,  
senior editor

For more information, see p. 82.



BY DAVID BONOM

## Now that winter's over,

I say goodbye to slow-cooked, rich dishes in favor of lighter, brighter, quicker meals. That means not only using the freshest produce, but also finding handy substitutions that speed up cooking time. When the flavor of roast chicken is what I'm after, I roast Cornish game hens instead, which only take half an hour in the oven. And I find that quick-cooking barley makes a tasty "risotto" without all the extra stirring. If you're really pressed for time, try dishes that already have the sides built in, like the chicken ragoût with fresh shiitake mushrooms and creamy new potatoes, or the flaky sautéed tilapia over Swiss chard on these pages.



## Roasted Apricot-Ginger Glazed Game Hens

*Serves four.*

**2 Cornish hens, 1½ lb. each**  
**4 tsp. toasted sesame oil**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**1 Tbs. minced fresh ginger**  
**1 clove garlic, minced**  
**½ cup apricot preserves**  
**2 tsp. honey**  
**2 tsp. soy sauce**  
**2 tsp. fresh lemon juice**  
**1 tsp. cornstarch**

Set a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 450°F. With a sharp knife or poultry shears, remove the backbones from the hens and slice through the breastbone, cutting the hens in half. Brush the skin of the hens with 2 tsp. of the sesame oil and set them, skin side up, on a wire rack set in a rimmed baking sheet. Sprinkle the skin with ½ tsp. salt and several grinds of pepper. Roast until the hens are almost cooked through (an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest part of the thigh should register 165°F), about 25 minutes.

Meanwhile, heat the remaining 2 tsp. sesame oil in a small saucepan over medium heat. Add the ginger

and garlic and cook, stirring often, until soft and fragrant, 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in the preserves, honey, soy sauce, and lemon juice; bring to a boil and cook, stirring occasionally, until the mixture has thickened slightly, 4 to 5 minutes. Dissolve the cornstarch in 1 tsp. water, add to the saucepan, and cook until the mixture thickens, another 1 minute.

Brush the hens with the apricot-ginger glaze and continue to roast until the glaze has browned in spots and the thermometer registers 170°F in the thigh, another 5 to 7 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper and serve immediately.

### Serving suggestion:

**Serve with a basmati rice and scallion pilaf and a baby spinach salad.**





## Spring Vegetable & Potato Frittata

*Serves four.*

- 8 large eggs**
- ¼ cup grated Parmigiano Reggiano (about ½ oz.)**
- 3 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- ⅛ tsp. cayenne**
- 2 to 3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**
- 1 medium Yukon Gold potato (about ½ lb.) scrubbed and cut into ½-inch dice (about 1½ cups)**
- 1 medium yellow onion, thinly sliced**
- ½ lb. medium-thick asparagus, trimmed and cut on the diagonal into 1-inch pieces**
- 3 cloves garlic, minced**
- 6 oz. shredded sharp Cheddar (about 1¾ lightly packed cups)**

In a medium bowl, whisk the eggs, Parmigiano, parsley, ½ tsp. salt, ⅛ tsp. pepper, and the cayenne.

Heat 2 Tbs. of the oil in a 10-inch ovenproof nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add the potato and ¼ tsp. salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until browned on several sides, 6 to 7 minutes. Transfer to a bowl with a slotted spoon. Reduce the heat to medium. If the pan is dry, add the remaining 1 Tbs. oil. Add the onion and cook, stir-

ring frequently, until it softens and begins to brown, 4 to 5 minutes. Stir in the asparagus, garlic, ¼ tsp. salt and ⅛ tsp. pepper. Cook, stirring frequently, until the asparagus is bright green and crisp-tender, 3 to 4 minutes. Lower the heat to medium low and add the egg mixture and the potatoes, stirring until the ingredients are combined, 10 to 15 seconds. Add the Cheddar and stir until well distributed. Cook without stirring until the eggs have almost set, 10 to 12 minutes. (The center may still be loose but should be bubbling a little; the sides should be set.) Meanwhile, position an oven rack 6 inches from the broiler element and heat the broiler to high.

Transfer the skillet to the oven and broil until the eggs have set completely and the top of the frittata is golden brown, 1 to 3 minutes. Let rest for 5 minutes. Transfer to a cutting board, cut into four wedges, and serve.

**Tip:** This frittata is a great make-ahead dinner. Let it cool to room temperature and refrigerate until ready to use. It can be warmed in the microwave or served at room temperature.



## Lemon Barley "Risotto" with Shrimp, Bacon & Spinach

*Serves four.*

- 6 slices bacon**
- 1 lb. large shrimp (21-25 count), peeled and deveined**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- ½ cup chopped shallots or onions**
- 1½ cups quick-cooking barley (see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 76)**
- 1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice**
- 2½ cups homemade or low-salt chicken broth**
- ¼ lb. (4 cups loosely packed) baby spinach, washed and spun dry**
- ⅓ cup freshly grated Pecorino Romano**
- 3 tsp. finely grated lemon zest**

Cook the bacon in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until browned and crisp. Remove from the skillet, drain on paper towels, and crumble into small pieces.

Increase the heat to medium high. Sprinkle the shrimp with ¼ tsp. salt and a few grinds pepper. Working in two batches to avoid

crowding, cook the shrimp in the bacon fat until lightly browned and opaque, 1½ to 2 minutes per side. Transfer the shrimp to a plate.

Add the shallots or onions to the skillet and cook until they start to soften, about 1 minute. Add the barley and stir until coated with the bacon fat, about 30 seconds. Add the lemon juice and cook, stirring, for 15 seconds. Pour in the chicken broth and bring to a boil, scraping up any browned bits in the pan. Reduce the heat to medium low, cover, and simmer until the barley is tender, 12 minutes. Uncover the pan, raise the heat to medium high, and cook, stirring occasionally, until most of the liquid has evaporated, 1 to 2 minutes. Stir in the spinach and cook until wilted, 1 minute. Stir in the bacon, shrimp, Pecorino, and lemon zest and heat through, 1 to 2 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper and serve immediately.



## Sautéed Tilapia over Swiss Chard with Tarragon Butter

*Serves two.*

**1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**  
**2 cloves garlic, minced**  
**1 lb. Swiss chard, fibrous stems and ribs discarded; leaves coarsely chopped, washed, and dried**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**5 Tbs. unsalted butter (4 Tbs. cut into small pieces)**  
**2 tilapia fillets, 6 oz. each**  
**1 shallot, chopped**  
**1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice**  
**1½ Tbs. chopped fresh tarragon**

Heat the oil in a 10- to 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add the garlic and cook until fragrant, 30 to 45 seconds. Add a big handful of the Swiss chard and cook, tossing often, until it has collapsed enough to add more. Continue adding the chard in batches until it's all in the pan and then cook until tender, 2 to 3 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper, divide the chard between two dinner plates, and keep warm.

Wipe out the skillet and return it to medium-high heat. Add 1 Tbs. of the butter and

let it melt. Sprinkle the tilapia with ¼ tsp. salt and a few grinds of pepper. Add the tilapia and cook, turning once halfway through cooking, until it's well browned and cooked through, 4 to 6 minutes. Top the chard with the tilapia and keep warm.

Add the shallot to the skillet and cook, stirring occasionally, until lightly browned and beginning to soften, 30 to 60 seconds. Add the lemon juice; it should evaporate almost instantly, but if not, cook until nearly evaporated, about 30 seconds. Remove the skillet from the heat and add the 4 Tbs. butter pieces and tarragon, stirring constantly until the butter melts. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Pour the butter sauce over the fish and chard and serve immediately.



## Campanelle with Broccoli Raab, Sausage & Olives

*Serves three to four.*

**1 lb. broccoli raab, thick stems trimmed off, leaves and florets rinsed well**  
**6 oz. dried campanelle pasta (2 cups)**  
**3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**  
**¾ lb. sweet Italian sausage (bulk sausage or links removed from casing)**  
**3 cloves garlic, minced**  
**¼ tsp. crushed red chile flakes**  
**¾ cup homemade or low-salt chicken broth**  
**½ cup pitted Kalamata olives, quartered**  
**2 tsp. finely grated lightly packed lemon zest**  
**⅓ cup freshly grated Pecorino Romano**  
**Kosher salt**

Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil over high heat. Have a bowl of ice water ready. Add the broccoli raab and cook until bright green and tender, 2 minutes (the water doesn't have to come back to a full boil once the broccoli raab has been added). With tongs or a slotted spoon, transfer the broccoli raab to the bowl of ice

water to stop the cooking. Drain well and gently squeeze the broccoli raab to remove excess water.

Return the pot of water to a boil, add the pasta, cook according to package directions, and drain.

While the campanelle cooks, heat the oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Add the sausage and cook, stirring and breaking it into smaller pieces with a wooden spoon until it's browned and almost cooked through, 4 to 6 minutes. Add the garlic and chile flakes and cook until the garlic is lightly golden, about 1 minute. Pour in the broth and bring to a boil; cook, scraping the pan with a wooden spoon occasionally, until the broth is reduced by about half, 3 to 4 minutes. Add the broccoli raab, olives, and lemon zest and cook, stirring, until hot, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the pasta and cheese to the skillet and toss well. Season to taste with salt and serve immediately.





## Pan-Seared Rib-Eye Steak with Balsamic Onion & Tomato Salsa

*Serves four.*

- 1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**
- 1 medium onion, cut into medium dice (to yield about 1½ cups)**
- 2 tsp. granulated sugar**
- 1 Tbs. balsamic vinegar**
- 1 pint grape tomatoes, halved**
- ¼ cup thinly sliced fresh basil leaves**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 2 Tbs. unsalted butter**
- 4 boneless rib-eye steaks, ¾ to 1 inch thick (6 to 8 oz. each)**

Heat the oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until hot; add the onion and sugar. Cook the onion, stirring occasionally, until it begins to soften but not brown, 4 to 5 minutes. Add the vinegar and cook until the onions are soft, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the tomatoes and cook, stirring, until they just begin to soften, 1 to 2 min-

utes. Remove the skillet from the heat, stir in the basil, and season the mixture to taste with salt and pepper. Transfer the mixture to a bowl and keep warm.

Season the steaks generously on both sides with salt and pepper. Wipe out the skillet and melt the butter in the skillet over medium-high heat. Cook two of the steaks until nicely browned on both sides and cooked to your liking, about 3 minutes per side for medium rare. Transfer the steaks to plates or a platter and keep warm while you cook the remaining two steaks. Serve the steaks topped with the onion and tomato salsa.

**Serving suggestion:**  
**Serve alongside a mixed salad of Bibb lettuce, spinach, and torn basil.**



## Chicken Ragoût with Shiitakes & New Potatoes

*Serves four.*

- 3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**
- ½ lb. fresh shiitake mushrooms, stemmed and quartered**
- ¾ lb. baby red potatoes, quartered**
- 1 cup frozen pearl onions**
- 8 cloves garlic**
- 2 Tbs. all-purpose flour**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken thighs, 6 to 7 oz. each**
- 1 tsp. fresh thyme leaves**
- 1 cup homemade or low-salt chicken broth**
- 3 Tbs. thinly sliced chives**

Heat 2 Tbs. of the oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat. When the oil is hot, add the mushrooms and cook, stirring occasionally, until they begin to soften, 2 minutes (don't worry if they stick a little). Add the potatoes and cook until they begin to brown lightly, 4 to 5 minutes. Add the onions and garlic and cook until the onions are thawed and the mixture begins to brown,

3 minutes. Transfer the mixture to a bowl.

Return the skillet to the stove and heat the remaining 1 Tbs. oil over medium-high heat. Spread the flour on a plate. Season the chicken thighs generously with salt and pepper and dredge the thighs in the flour, shaking off any excess. Cook the chicken until browned on one side, 4 minutes. Flip the chicken and cook until the other side is browned, another 4 minutes. Stir in the mushroom mixture and the thyme and cook for 1 minute. Pour in the chicken broth, scraping up any browned bits in the skillet. Bring the mixture to a boil, reduce the heat to medium, cover, and simmer rapidly until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of a thigh registers 170°F, another 15 to 20 minutes. Serve immediately, arranging the chicken on top of the vegetables and sprinkling with the chives.